I GO WEST

By the same Author

Just Flesh (Thacker)
Out of Dust (Thacker)
The Pulse of Oxford (Dent)
Oh! You English (Muller)

D. F. KARAKA

I Go West

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To

MY FATHER.

for his faith in me.

CONTENTS

I

BACKGROUND

I AM STILL FRIGHTFULLY RESPECTABLE IN SPITE OF three lamentable failures in my Bar Finals and one at the Indian Civil Service. My father had already told me on the second memorable occasion that my name was mud in India where I was once looked upon as a steady and promising boy.

Respectability has dogged my footsteps ever since I can remember, for I belong to one of those families to which honour, tradition and glory matter. My father, a respectable Government servant, retired after a spotlessly clean tenure of Government service. His father before him did the same. And his grandfather too. All perfect gentlemen, full of tact, common sense and discretion.

I was naturally cut out for the same job—steady, hard-working, respectable. I remember hearing as a little boy my grandmother say that when they returned the Star of India on the death of one of my ancestors to whom it had been awarded, she had marked a small cross on the back of it and returned it with a prayer that some day I should have that same star bestowed on me. But the standard of

moral values has changed since then, and of this I am quite certain—that neither I nor any child of mine shall ever see that Star of India again.

I am a Parsee. That does not mean very much. It is a common failing with a great many of my race to refer to our connection with old Persia in order to distinguish ourselves from the Indian people—a distinction as absurd as it is unnecessary. For we have been separated from Persia for twelve hundred years, and except for the streak of Prometheanism that runs through our religion, we are as much Indian as the Indians.

We have our prophet Zarathustra and our bible is the *Zend Avesta.* We have a Fire Temple where we pray and a Tower of Silence where we offer our dead to the vultures. Nietzsche has written about the philosophy of our religion, though few of us know of the existence of *Thus Spake Zarathustra.* Fewer still have read it. It is typical of us—of the superficiality that characterises our race. There is nothing profound about us. We are a race of bank clerks and commercial travellers, a vagrant inbred race, which landed on the shores of India because of a fair wind that blew that way, and ever since we have always been moving the way of popular opinion. When the British Raj was strong and powerful, we were staunch and loyal to it. Now with the rising tide of Congress opinion, and the growth of the Indian National Movement, we

have suddenly awakened to the fact that our duty lies to the country which twelve hundred years ago found a home for us, when we were fleeing from Persia in an attempt to rescue the Sacred Fire from the onslaught of Islam and the Arabs. We are a hundred thousand of our kind in the world. I do not vouch for the accuracy of our numbers. What matters is that we are a very insignificant minority in India, but like the Jews, we have a flair for making money and know the art of grabbing the key positions.

We are by no means a great race. There are no world figures among us. We do not aspire so high. Narrow-minded and insular in outlook, we do not get very far and are sceptical about those who want to. The only things we understand are the things we see around us, every day. We are a sort of small-town people, even though we are to be found chiefly in the great cities.

That is the background of my life. I used to feel quite proud at one time that among my somewhat distant ancestors were Rustom and Sorab, and I was brought up to believe that the stock I came from was, to say the least, alpha-double-plus. It was an uncomfortable feeling to be so respectable and I found early in life that it hindered my freedom. My wishes, my ideals had always to bow to the sanctity of our religion, to the purity of the race and to the tradition of the family. Later came other obligations. I began to realise that my alleged Persian ancestry

would not get me very far, for after all I was to live my life in India as we had done for several generations, and the sooner I acknowledged that fact the better. Early in life I began to look upon myself as I really was. I gave up the idea of going through life on false pretences. Much later I formed another allegiance which was based not on caste, creed, religion or nationality, but on the fact that I was, like all my countrymen and several millions besides, born dark. It brought me much nearer to reality than any other classification.

Born in 1911, I belong chronologically to the pre-war period of diplomacy and intrigue. But by instinct I am a product of the war, and by conviction I feel a close bond to the post-war generation. The most impressionable years of my life were certainly post-war, for I hardly knew at that distance and at my age that there was a fierce war waging in Europe, nor did I realise the gravity of it. The India of my childhood was calm and peaceful and no one in the house ever spoke of the great armies that were marching over the face of Europe.

The dominating note was that of contentment—a perfect bliss that is only the privilege of those who live in the shelter of self-complacency. It was a feeling of tranquil pleasure that knew no pangs of remorse or conscience. As children when we turned over the pages of the *Illustrated London News* and pointed with messy fingers to the pictures of barbed

wire fences and guns and dead bodies, we used to exclaim with horror: "Ooh. War!"

Yet that was all we saw of the war. It might just as well have been waging in another world, for everything that was not quiet and peaceful seemed so far away. Nothing ever worried us or anybody else around us, and as I saw our smart women hustle into carriages and drive to the Ladies' Gymkhana, I felt very proud that our women were doing their bit by making garments for the Red Cross and the wounded, even though every stitch was intercepted by a sandwich and a little piece of cake, and gossip which was always damning. These are among the earliest recollections. Vague and dusty now, they are difficult to shake away.

But nothing important would ever happen. The routine of the day was, for the men their office, followed in the evening with a visit to the club and dinner either at home or with friends. The women spent their mornings shopping at large English stores, when they dressed with particular care, for this was regarded somewhat as a social function. If they went into the *bazaar*, good clothes were seldom worn for fear of contamination, even though they never stepped out of their carriages or their cars and always waited for the owner of the shop to bring out his wares.

At lunch the topic of conversation was the morning's shopping, the bargains each had picked

up, the gossip of the smart set, the new engagements, the babies that were shortly to be born. Then came the short afternoon siesta to make up for the strain of the morning's hard work. Then tea. Then a frantic discussion as to the particular *saree* that would be worn that evening. All this was very important in the India to which I belonged.

We knew only two seasons. It was either bright sunshine or it rained. And how it rained during the months of the monsoon. But everything was definite. There was no uncertainty, not even about the weather. It was either hot and our dark bodies sweated in the heat or it was cool and the sea breeze made the evenings pleasant. So we were brought up to expect that things would turn out as we had anticipated. We took life for granted and there was no reason why we should not. The most remarkable thing about our existence was that it bore the mark of security. We were not rich, but poverty was inconceivable. We were far too respectable to be poor.

I remember the parties that were given in our house which I was too young to attend. I would persuade the old *ayah* to let me peep through one of the door slits to see the important guests arrive. Dinner jackets and evening clothes had always impressed me, and I used to admire the gold and silver that was splashed all over the ladies' dresses. Gradually the party would disappear into the

dining-room on the farther side, and if I promised to behave, I was given an extra helping of ice-cream, before being put to bed. In my dreams these same people would reappear and I would wake up in the morning and feel I had mixed with very important persons.

Various bits and pieces of family history, pieced together, polished and censored, would pass out for my hearing after having been awarded certificate "U". One particularly persistent episode referred to the arrival of Edward VII as Prince of Wales on the shores of India when my great-grandfather read the address of welcome on behalf of the Indian people. Much later, Edward as King of England mentioned this fact to some other member of our family at some royal function in London. So our family history was made—on the shores of India and in the Courts of Europe!

I remember, too, my father writing to me on my birthday. In the middle of his greetings there was a sort of genealogical tree, from which I could at a glance see all the titles and the achievements from which I had sprung. Great things were therefore predicted for me—the sort of great things which I don't intend to fulfil.

The years rolled on—school, college, the same routine, a change of residence when my father was transferred, more people, new faces, all meaningless. They were all respectable. That was all that

mattered. All through their lives they had played for safety, got steady jobs and given birth to legitimate children. Promiscuity was unknown in that little world of ours. Nobody got any further than holding hands, and we only thought of women in terms of marriage.

One day I read Shaw's *Candida* and my conception of the Western woman began to take shape. I was left unsatisfied, with a craving for self-expression, a longing for lips I had never tasted, for worlds I had never seen but only dreamt of, of people different from those I saw around me.

I would sit in my room late at night reading. From above the Custom House where we lived I could see the tin roofs of the warehouse sheds shining in the moonlight because of the dew that had fallen on them, and a little further were the silhouettes of black cranes—dark deceptive shadows against the sky and the harbour lights that twinkled, and in the quiet stillness of the night you could hear the lapping of the water in the distance. I would try to visualise London and Paris and New York and places where I had never been and wonder why they were so far away. There was something in the West that always called me to it—and I felt that someday somewhere in these far-off lands I would find the true expression of my energies, which the respectability of my surroundings had stifled in me in India.

I remember writing as a boy my impression of

my grandmother's funeral. It was the first time I had set eyes on a corpse and saw the grey film that envelops the human body; the first time I realised what it must feel to be dead, lying on cold marble; and then the gruesome thought that my body too would some day be flung to the vultures in the Tower of Silence as is the Parsee custom. It revolted me even though the scientific world has pronounced this method of disposing the body more hygienic than the Christian burial. All this I felt and wrote and then I was ashamed of it, for it was poor in execution and far too sentimental in expression.

I remember too an essay on Rupert Brooke whom I looked upon as 'a modern' and the chuckle on my father's face when he read it. It seemed to say I was young and that my writing showed too much immaturity. And I resented that. I sent it anonymously to a local paper in Karachi where we were stationed, and to my surprise it was accepted. It was the first bit of my writing that I had seen in print, and the thrill I got when opening the *Sind Observer* a few days later made up for my father's cynicism.

So life went on. In spite of the encouragement I got from the family it was always made clear to me that these were only passing fantasies, that they should never be looked upon as anything more than an intelligent pastime. The trouble is that opinion still holds in India. Journalism and writing are not

regarded with the same reverence as the Bar and the Civil Service, which are the true tests of respectability, the hall-mark of the perfect gentleman, and for prospective mothers-in-law, two points on the matrimonial market.

All this is important for understanding the India into which I was born and the influences that dominated the generation to which I belong. To us self-respect was worth more than all the Stars of India put together. But we young men, who were fighting for our freedom, found to our embarrassment that our fathers were on the other side. This is true of my generation, though I take examples only from my own life because the details of it are familiar to me. They have given me a basis to work on and to analyse for myself the problems which others can only explain in abstract. Maybe some day I shall realise how much better it would have been to have settled down in the Indian Civil Service with a hundred lesser men at my beck and call, answering the bell each time my finger touched it; how much better to know that on the first of each month there was a definite sum of money credited to my current account, growing larger as I remained in the service; how much better to have a home and a wife and children and everything provided for; and in my dotage to collect my pension. Whether I shall ever pine for these things it is too early to tell. Meanwhile, the struggle for recognition, gruesome as it

has been, occupies the greater part of my conscious and unconscious self. And the lust for writing—it would be immoral to call it zeal or even passion—is too strong to be suppressed ; the lust for freedom of thought and expression ; the lust for wandering over the face of this world ; the lust for power, greatness and all such base and earthly things ; for drink and women and music against the recognised rules of caste and creed and family tradition, against respectability and orthodox convention—this lust, natural in a man of my years, has first to be satisfied.

Then maybe, when my life is over they can throw the carcass to the vultures, for I shall have no further use for it, and when the last rites have been performed, they will pray that I may be forgiven the indiscretions of youth. Those that come after me will have their chance to draw their own conclusions.

For that is the way of human nature that we learn from the example of others and from the trivial things which we say to each other, the things which become personal and make a permanent and lasting impression on the mind. So one day, when I was standing in the furthest corner of a lecture-room in Bombay with my back to the wall, I heard Sarojini Naidu speak on "Youth". "The sword that was fretting in its sheath...." she said, and I knew then that this charming woman, now long past her youth (she will forgive me if I am unkind), had lived life fully and taken so much from it and given so much

to those like me who needed inspiration and a mental stimulant to shake off the lethargy which was like a malignant growth in my otherwise healthy body. Then I knew what it felt to have youth and to be able to enjoy it. That one sentence of hers meant a lot to me.

First there was the sheath, symbolic of the environment which surrounded me. The sword and its sharp edge ; its power to kill, to sever ; its shine and lustre ; the fretting which was the restlessness of my generation. That was to be young and I have carried that impression with me ever since. Mrs. Naidu has written much and said more. She has often been referred to as the nightingale of India. But to me all that is quite unimportant ; nor am I enamoured of her because of her vituperative outbursts in the political arena. These things take second place to her understanding of youth. On that she has said the last word, even if it should turn out to be only a quotation !

All this comes back now and more, though I do not vouch for the chronological order of events. But every detail has its significance and has left a mark which is indelible. And other little incidents, too, have left their mark.

From a flat in Green's Mansions I saw the imposing sight of the new Viceroy arrive—Lord Irwin, now Lord Halifax. It was April and the sun was shining on the brown stone of the Gateway of India.

Red carpet had been unrolled on the cemented pavement and important people were looking important in their uniforms, their Indian costumes, and their morning coats which had become green in the service of the Crown. And interspersed in this conglomeration of dress was the drab khaki in which the army in India is clad.

In the harbour across the way the P. and O. liner had dropped anchor and a special launch flying the Union Jack brought their Excellencies to the footsteps of the Gateway where they disembarked. Under the Gateway they sat on chairs covered in red and gold to receive the address from the people of India—which is somewhat of an exaggeration, for only six per cent of the three hundred and fifty odd millions are literate. All the same, the Mayor of Bombay or the Sheriff read this out on behalf of "the people", bowing very low each time he came across words like "humbly," "gratitude", "your Excellencies", and there were enough of these in the address of welcome to give the fittest among them an attack of lumbago. When the address was over, their Excellencies drove in State through the streets, which had been cleared in their honour, to Government House, where they stayed till the morning when a special train took them to Delhi. While the May orwas reading the address of welcome, the Congress had declared a *hartal* and the bazaars were closed as on days of national mourning,

London papers the next day conveyed the impression that the new representative of the Crown had found a place in the hearts of the Indian people and that the Empire of India was as safe as ever. So this little play is acted at the Gateway of India every five years, though the cast and the leading players in our little pantomime undergo a little change.

In the Gymkhana or the Club that evening the so-called leaders of the community compared notes. Each had formed his own opinion of the new Viceroy. But they all agreed that whatever policy he would pursue during his tenure of office as Governor-General, his countenance was distinguished and that he looked "noble." These leaders of our communities have an intuitive feeling all their own and their sense of values depends on whether a man or a thing is "decent" or "not decent". So a house which is suited to their requirements is decent, or a woman with a pleasant smile, or a promising young man with a steady income, or a suit from Pleydell and Smith, or a tie from Sulka's—all these are decent. And the Viceroy and Governor-General of India must fall under the same category of being decent.

The arrival of the Viceroy on the shores of India is an event of some importance. But the drive in State through the streets of India of a representative of the Crown is not the same as a Royal procession

in the streets of England. The monarchy is held in far greater esteem and respect by Englishmen in England than the Governor-Generalship is held by Indians in India. The English institution is dear to England because it has sprung up from within the people. It is part of them, and English monarchs of recent years have justified the confidence the people have placed in them. It exists by the continued goodwill of the people and when they forfeit that, the only way out is by abdication. We have seen that happen.

So the monarchy in England remains something living, tangible, something which democratic rulers have made human. Naturally English people feel the call of that sovereignty. The crowds that rallied round Buckingham Palace on the fateful night of August the fourth, 1914, when it was announced that England had plunged into the vortex of the European conflict, was representative of the feelings of English people at that time. Call it nationalism, call it patriotism, call it love for King and Country. The main thing was that something electric, something stimulating, something noble and uplifting, passed like a current through the English people. They felt it. And the only person through whom they could express it was their King. He was the living symbol of their patriotism and their love for their country.

But with us in India it is a different tale. For all

our protestations of loyalty and allegiance to the Crown, the imitations of sovereignty in the shape of representatives of the Crown, however excellent they may be, can never mean the same to us as the genuine article does to the English people. There could be no crowds rallying to Viceroy's House to pay homage as the crowds in England do outside Buckingham Palace. Something would always be wanting. And I felt that something missing when in brilliant sunshine the State carriage left the Gateway of India with the new Viceroy.

In sharp contrast to this is the picture in my mind of the funeral of C. R. Das, by profession a lawyer, by conviction a nationalist and a Congressman, by instinct a patriot. He was more commonly known as Deshbandu Das—a term of endearment by which only those who have made great sacrifice for their country were called.

"Deshbandu" is not a title which any one individual can confer on another. It is something that comes out of the people—spontaneously, without previous deliberation or conference.

I was not present at the funeral, for he died in Calcutta and I was many miles away; but I felt the sorrow and the loss of a countryman as if I was at his death-bed and had known him all my life as a personal friend. It was so all over the country, and pictures of the funeral gave some idea of the crowds that had gathered to pay their last respects to him.

Borne on his simple bier he was taken to the Burning Ghat to be cremated, his ashes being disposed of after the rites had been performed according to Hindoo custom. There was no escort, no body-guards, no soldiers with arms reversed. No guns were fired in salute. What tribute was paid, was from the hearts of the people, and I am sure he liked that best.

Then I knew that if I was to understand my country I would have to start afresh, brushing aside the education which had been thrust upon me and discarding the environment by which I was surrounded. And that was no easy matter. It meant undoing the work of generations, and of displeasing those who meant very much to me. The slightest suspicion of individuality on my part and a committee of inquiry consisting of senior members of the family would sit in judgment and ponder over the cause of this grossly immoral streak which was working its way into a home which had always been above reproach. Maybe there was some unwholesome influence on my young mind, they said, in which case the bug must be treated at once and the germ killed before the disease got out of control. My list of friends would be carefully scrutinised, the books I read censored, and whatever the results of such an investigation, I would get a dressing down which would cure me for quite a while. I was charged in turn with insolence, disobedience,

ingratitude, and if I ventured to say anything in defence, it amounted to Contempt of Court. The judge, jury and the prosecution were one and the same and the verdict was invariably "guilty" and the plea for leniency always secured a pardon. Sometimes there was a probationary period lasting a few hours in which the higher authorities refused to speak to me unless I showed how truly sorry I was. This usually happened just when I wanted to go to a first-class Charlie Chaplin picture or to see the Garbo in a thrilling romance, which was more important to me then than the condition of the masses and the poverty of India and the effect of the British rule. So I proved I was sorry and went to the pictures. I now look upon that truce with the family in the same way as the Germany of Hitler regards the Treaty of Versailles.

All this happened long ago. Those were the days when the wearing of a Gandhi cap was a crime. In Government offices it was regarded almost as an act of sedition, or if it was not an act then intent was alleged. In any case the offence was grave and the sooner the unfortunate individual realised it the better. Among the Upper Four Hundred, it was a *faux-pas-de-luxe*—like going in a high-neck sweater to a Londonderry reception.

Since then, much water has flowed down the Ganges and the little children who used to bathe in its waters have grown up to be men and women. On

the banks fresh grass has grown, where there was only weed. The earth is no longer parched, no longer trodden upon by the heavy boots of that invisible army which trampled on it in the name of tradition. New constitutions, new electorates, new moral standards, new ideals, and new life have sprung up.

We have watched this change. We have seen the same ladies of fashion who turned up their noses at the mention of home-spuns replace their gorgeous silk *sarees* with new ones, but the silk now comes from Benares and Pittapuram instead of Paris and Shanghai. The shoes of Pinet have given way to sandals made by Indian *mochees.* And at the famous shop, *Swadeshi,* smart girls from good Indian families were seen behind the counter, working voluntarily for hours every day. All this happened in a flash, and those who could not keep pace have been left behind. Some homes have been broken because of the conflict of ideals between parent and child. But out of it has come the India I know.

So it is even for us a new country, changing every day in outlook, in ideals. What Kipling wrote may have been very beautiful literature, but it is now preposterously out-of-date. And with Kipling goes Katherine Mayo and that whole crowd of foreign missionaries from civilised countries that have tried to portray India to the Indians. It is time one of us wrote about ourselves not in the orthodox style of a pompous Victorian monologue, but rather as a

confession, not sparing our blushes. We have reason to colour in spite of our perpetually brazen complexions.

I have often seen some of my countrymen, rich, important, influential people, behave in a manner so embarrassing to me that I have shrivelled up at the sight of them. I realise then how completely out of place we can be in the outside world, once we have been torn away from the security of our surroundings. I have known what it feels like to be away from home, flung out into the world which cares little for your ancestry or the purity of the race or the unimpeachable record of your family, and where the only things that matter are your bank balance and your colour. Then I forget that I am a Parsee, or an Indian or anything else, and I realise that the most significant fact about myself is that I was born dark. Born dark !--not the superficial tan you acquire in the South of France. But a great many of my countrymen who come here don't like this rude classification of men. Some who have wormed their way into the somewhat dubious English "society" dislike it intensely. They prefer to be called Persians or British—anything but dark and Indian, and that is, I am afraid, what we really are. I used to feel the embarrassment once so I know the feeling. But time has hardened my feelings and I am not so sensitive as before. Something within me has died in these seven years away from home and

it is just as well. I often wish that when we come to England for the first time we would not be so naive, so full of hope, so believing. But every P. and O. liner brings more and more of those who like me stepped out of the smugness of our homes to be battered in our effort to acquire an English education. It is the contrast that is a bit too much for us, and I often wonder why our parents who are willing to send us on our own all these thousands of miles don't allow us to go round the corner when living at home. We present a pathetic picture of completely helpless young men, who know little about the world and less about life.

I cannot forget a fellow passenger on the wagon-lits from Marseilles, and the embarrassment he caused me when he pulled down his yellow steel suit-case in sight of a compartment full of passengers. On it in large white letters had been painted his full name, followed by the inevitable suffix "B.A.,LL.B." For that I shall never forgive him. It gave me an insight into the working of the mind of the average educated Indian. Unfortunately we have our B.A.'s and our M.A.'s and our LL.B.'s in the same large proportion as Germany has its swarms of learned Doctors. But to flaunt that not uncommon distinction on a yellow steel trunk right across the continent of Europe is a bit tough on those of us who are sensitive to such things. I had the feeling that maybe he had never been given a chance, and

by the time we got to Paris I felt sorry for this young man who had obviously left his home for the first time to come to England if only to have his nails manicured. Sometimes that is about all it amounts to, and those who can afford the luxury have paid for it. All this I thought of as I watched him hour after hour while the train steamed into Dijon, Lyons and the other stations before the Gare de Lyons in Paris. For nearly twelve hours he had not touched a morsel of food because he was an orthodox vegetarian and had never eaten a meal outside his house except on board ship, where he had stuck to the strict vegetarian diet which the all-understanding P. and O. provides for its more orthodox Indian clientele. In my mouth I could still taste the *bœuf á la mode* I had for lunch and the *Sole meunière* before that. I asked him later what he intended doing about food when he got to Paris late that night. He did not speak a word of French, and his English, in spite of his two degrees, was pretty awful. Quite unconcernedly he replied: " I shall buy some fruit from the bazaar." Then I knew that he would have to go right through the mill, like so many of us who had come to Europe before him, making saps of ourselves on more occasions than one. But in my fellow passenger's case, it would be a start not from the ground-floor, but from the basement.

Fortunately for me it was not my first visit to Europe. I knew my Paris and liked it, but to him it

was a sort of den of thieves, where the men were all apaches drawing a knife on the slightest provocation and treating their women rough. He had heard of the Folies Bergère where, he said, the women were all nude and therefore immoral. So he had come all prepared to face the battle of life, with full instructions from home as to what he should do and what he should avoid. I could therefore do nothing for him. Weeks later I ran into him in London and asked him whether Paris had been so dreadful after all. Yes, it had; but it was one of his own countrymen who had led him up the garden path. In the guise of the Good Samaritan, he accosted my friend at the station, offering to help a fellow countryman, and in a quarter of an hour had put him into a small hotel in a shady quarter of the French capital. He had fallen in the one trap he had least suspected. Later that night when he returned from his bath, he found in his room an uninvited guest sprawling on his bed, her flimsy *négligé* revealing a form which though he knew to be dangerous, was, he confessed, "quite luscious." It was like a French postcard come true.

He managed to get rid of her, but not without difficulty and some substantial damage to his pocket, for in addition to what he gave her, she had helped herself to his railway ticket, his gold watch and his diamond ring. He told his story and felt pleased with himself, for from his point of view he had got off cheaply.

Then I knew that we in India were comparatively naive and that our insistence on respectability did not get us very far. We were unschooled in the ways of the sophisticated world, still a fairly primitive people trying to ape a civilization foreign to us and neglecting a culture which we had inherited, but which we were too ashamed to dig up from the past and cultivate. That is why we have remained too slow for the moderns and are not quite authentic for the ancients. Maybe some day our children will make up their minds which way they want to turn. Maybe they will get a chance of seeing their country as it really is and decide what they are going to do with it—a chance which I got when one Saturday afternoon my father came back early from the office and saw me turning over the pages of *Man and Superman* and marking certain passages in it with the nondescript word "Modern." He stared at me for a few moments and without any warning shot out the question : "Would you like to go to Oxford ? "

II

VARNISH

SO ANOTHER CHAPTER BEGAN, FOR A YEAR LATER I found myself in the porter's lodge at Lincoln College collecting a miscellaneous assortment of correspondence that awaited me in the pigeon-hole marked "K". The greater part of it consisted of circulars from tradespeople advertising flannels, china, sport requisites and such things as a freshman at Oxford might require. There were a few letters on which I recognised familiar stamps from India, which was now so far away, and the news they contained was at least a fortnight old. All the same those first letters were very welcome, for I had a conscious feeling that after all it was my home.

I went through the whole pile though my reading was constantly interrupted by various college secretaries who asked me to join this and that club or association, and rattled off the advantages they offered to those who decided to join. Then came a letter in an unfamiliar female hand. The stamp showed an Oxford postmark and the address inside read Woodstock Road. It was short and to the point.

"DEAR MR. KARAKA,

"I understand you come from India. Have you a copy of the Bible? If not, can I send you one?

"Yours sincerely,

"Etc., etc., etc."

"Ah, heathen!" I said to myself, for that was what the dear lady must have thought of me. This was my chance of entering the promised land with the help of a clergyman's widow who had, I discovered later, a sister in the "Poonjab". One afternoon out of curiosity I went to her home for tea. I was late and when I was announced into the living-room I discovered half a dozen other heathens who, like me, had come into what is called "the inside of an English home."

The conversation was well on its way to India and I had to catch up as fast as I could. Then I knew for the first time how infested my country was with lions and tigers and other wild animals which I gathered from the conversation were prowling in the streets of Bombay or Calcutta. That was how India appeared to those hundreds of thousands of Englishmen whose knowledge of that country is based on the random utterances of Christian missionaries and second-rate politicians who run up and down this country interpreting the Indian problem to the English people. What Indian parents teach their

children about India is only suicide, but what Englishmen are teaching their children about that part of their Empire is murder.

That was my last visit to the dear lady or to any other such dear lady in Oxford or London or anywhere else. It was not my cup of tea. Others who had come to Oxford with me made several gallant efforts to convince their hostesses that we did not all make *puja* to little stone gods on little hillocks somewhere on the Western Ghauts, that in spite of the illiteracy that prevailed in India and the empty ceremonial that enveloped its religions, there was something about us that was living and real. That even we were civilised, though we did not show it in the only way in which they understood it here—by acquiring a sort of studied indifference to life, a perpetual boredom which was the cult of the pseudo-moderns.

But even they gave up after several gallant efforts and I chuckled each time I encountered a new sinner who had revolted against that house of God, which was for us situated in North Oxford.

That was one phase of the Indian problem. Some Englishmen like to call it "their mission". How I hate that word. Reminds me of society women who open rescue homes for fallen women and who preach morality to the unfortunate individuals mixed with large doses of condescension, and who at their sumptuous dinner-tables talk glibly of pitying the poor

white slaves. So were we poor little Indian boys, far away from home in this land of hope and glory and the dear old ladies in North Oxford were trying to hold our hands to guide us on the narrow path of truth and beauty.

It is difficult for any Indian to feel comfortable in Oxford if he has not already been to an English public school. There are so many cliques that have stuck to each other for years that an outsider feels lost among them. Many of us feel lonesome and hate it, though some have been more fortunate than others.

I moved about in a small circle of friends that hovered round the Union. Attached to it were half a dozen undergradu*ettes* who came to coffee with us, and were present at most of our parties. I noticed that some were more pleasant than others, which was quite natural, but it took me a long time to realise that there was a reason for the aloofness of those who kept at a distance—a reason which had nothing to do with me as an individual, but because of the colour of my race. Then I sat up and took notice. It is one thing to feel you are not liked because of your personality or for your lack of personality, but at England's premier University you do not expect to encounter a well-bred English girl who has had strict instructions from her family "not to mix with Indians and Chinese." What annoyed me more was that she was the daughter of

a retired I.C.S., who had lived and fed and educated his children on Indian money and even now the pension he drew came out of the Indian exchequer. I felt, for the first time, that there was something in all that Gandhi and the others said about mis-spent Indian money which had a great deal of truth in it, and that there was a justification for the bitterness so many of my countrymen felt—a bitterness which sometimes softens in the belief that sometime somewhere all outstanding accounts will be settled.

Some months passed and a new term began at Oxford. I was on my way to Lincoln and as I turned into the Turl I saw this girl, who had noticeably avoided me on several occasions, coming in my direction. I knew that it was going to be embarrassing for both of us. I did not particularly want to meet her. So I turned into a shop at the corner to make some futile inquiry about the price of a shirt in the window. When I came out she was waiting for me, and began a very friendly talk as if nothing had ever happened. I stood there without saying much while she enthusiastically discussed the parties of the coming term. At the end of a long pause I asked:

"What's happened to you....?"

"I have grown up, that's all," she replied.

There was nothing more to be said. She had grown up and wanted me to know it. That was all. I felt pleased, though I did not show it. On the contrary,

I was condescendingly polite, and the forced smile on my face drooped at the sides, and in the corner of my lips was just a suggestion of mildcontempt. Maybe it was not quite cricket, but cricket is exclusively an English game and though we have learnt to play it out in India, sometimes we want to forget the rules.

A lot of important events happened in India and England while I was still at Oxford. The Round Table Conferences, the visit of Mr. Gandhi and the framing of the New Constitution had brought the Indian question to the front page. Oxford began to take more notice of those of us who had taken the trouble to acquaint ourselves with the happenings in India. We became specialists in this new subject.

I got my first paper speech at the Union on India, and got elected to the Library Committee, later to the Standing Committee, and eventually became Secretary in that hectic term when we debated the King and Country motion. I got a kick out of writing the minutes of that debate, and thoroughly enjoyed wading through the hundreds of letters which came from all parts of the world every morning for the rest of that term. That was an education in itself, and no degree suffixed to my name could ever express the value of that experience.

I was able to view this whole affair at the Union in a slightly different manner from all the others. I was always conscious of being an outsider that had been

drawn into the vortex of this controversial debate by a combination of circumstances. It gave me an intense satisfaction to see the youth of England rebel against orthodoxy, against public opinion. But it was not long before I also felt what the majority of the Union did, and the pacifist argument seemed most convincing at a time Europe was in such an unhealthy state of mind.

When we met the week after, the President began as usual by calling upon the Secretary to read the minutes of the last meeting. It was a packed house for the storm had already burst in the national and the international press. I read the minutes and sat down, feeling very proud that it should have fallen to my lot to write them. As I sat down, various members came in, and took their seats. I then became conscious of some crowding round me, and the next moment I realised the minutes were gone, being torn by a group of patriotic young men, who had suddenly discovered their patriotism. I preserved a small bit for myself, and re-wrote the minutes. Hardly anyone in the house knew then that anything like this had happened and of course the Press lapped up this new development in what was already a first-class newspaper sensation.

The imagination of some enterprising journalist resulted in my being called "an amateur boxer" " a distinguished boxer ", " a boxing blue ", and I have retained this distinction on the records of the

London newspapers even though I have not so much as put my hands in a pair of gloves. It gave me a feeling of security, which was most useful, specially as I had received threatening letters from anonymous and patriotic gentlemen. So that the reputation of being a first-class boxer was most useful at such a time, and I did not contradict the reports. My digs were carefully guarded for a number of days by plain clothes men from the University police, for there was no knowing what a handful of hooligans would do. On the day on which Randolph Churchill and Lord Stanley of Alderley lost the motion to expunge the minutes from the records of the society, a few undergraduates arrived in the debating hall wearing long black beards which they had bought at the local hairdresser's to add a little comic relief to this somewhat serious affair. We celebrated that night, and for some unknown reason I acquired one of these black beards for myself and found it most becoming. Nearing midnight I arrived at my digs and walked in complete with my beard to the great amusement of my landlady. A minute later the door bell rang and a plain clothes man was at the door inquiring about the bearded gentleman who had just walked in. I knew then I was well looked after.

Secretary, Treasurer, Librarian—slowly I went through them all, attempting no short cuts, for those who were immediately above me in the hierarchy were in a much stronger position than I was, and

they also happened to be two of my personal friends with whom I spent the greater part of every term. When my turn was due, I would have finished my three years at Oxford, and I felt it a shame to leave without making an attempt at the Presidential chair, which I coveted so much. I wrote to my father and asked him whether he would let me stay up an extra term at the end of which I would know the results of the elections. It meant postponing my Civil Service effort, but he gave me the chance, for which I have always been very grateful.

Circumstances combined in my favour, and when I heard the news late at night when the votes were counted, I smiled vaguely and laughed, but I was too excited to realise what had really happened. I felt pleased with myself, with life, with Oxford, for there were circumstances about my election that took it out of the scope of an individual success. It was as if I had crashed into the stronghold of a bigoted tradition, which had refused admission to much stronger claimants than myself. Next morning as I walked to my college, I felt a different man. I felt as if I had achieved something—not only for myself but for my people. Those who had hardly noticed me during the first three years because I was an Indian and my race was dark, began to think I was not so bad after all. Even those who hated me sent me invitations to lunch and dinner in the hope that they would get an early chance of speaking at

the Union. But the day's fun was spoilt by a paragraph in a leading London paper, which suggested, somewhat ungraciously, that now that an Indian had been made President of the Union, the office was no longer what it was. I have never forgotten that nor forgiven the man who wrote it. That remains for me an outstanding account.

But Oxford itself treated me very well. There was at that time a powerful contingent of left-wingers who predominated the political thought and opinion of Oxford, and they were, fortunately for me, all intellectually grown-up.

Whatever else it might have done, that term at Oxford made me decide that the Indian Civil Service was not my calling. It would not be fair to myself if I sat for that exam indifferently, and not fair to the service if I managed to worm in. Although I had done nothing either at Oxford or in India to be graded in the First Class, I had also never had a failure. I had always managed to scrape through somehow and I hated the idea of courting a certain failure. However, I sat and failed, and it took away most of the joy of the years at Oxford.

I knew that I was not the type that could ever become a Civil Servant. I hated discipline and would probably have burnt my fingers over a difference of opinion with my immediate superior. The Civil Service prefers the solid type, sound and steady and respectable. There is a certain minimum of in-

telligence required, but a maximum of hard work. The key to success is grinding at a crammer's for so many hours a day. The compulsory subjects include a paper on everyday science, though I failed to see why I was expected to know about things like ice and how it is made. In the general paper on English we were asked to write a poem in alternating quatraines about an airman who has just flown to Venus and back. How often in a Civil Service career would a man be required to perform this flight of imagination, scanned and written in alternating rhymes? Or is this to help them to kill time when flung out in some out-station where there would be little else to do but to write poetry?

I know that there are hardly any members of the I.C.S. in India—I refer to the Indians among them—who believe that the British rule and the Indian Constitution leave nothing to be desired. On the contrary, some of the strongest criticism has come from among the younger men in the Civil Service, but they are tactful and discreet and express their opinion only in their own intimate circle. It is in fact a different Civil Service from that in which our fathers served. Even so there is a limit to their independence. Often it is like selling your soul for a mess of pottage.

But to have failed in that exam left a sort of bad taste in my mouth and among my so-called friends in India I found I had lost a good many. Overnight

from a promising young man, I became a waster of my own time and my father's money. I must be drinking heavily, they said. I was getting too big for my boots. I was leading an immoral life, whatever that may mean. In fact I was an undesirable young man whose example must not be imitated. There were hardly a handful of people who still had any faith in me, but even this number has dwindled, though four people have not given up. They are a father, a mother, a sister and a brother; but for them Oxford would never have been possible, nor anything that I may do in life.

Oxford was the turning point. It opened my eyes about India as nothing else had done before. For hours I used to look through the two great volumes of the Round Table Conference report and read pages and pages of evidence. In parts it made interesting reading, but a great deal of it was dull and monotonous. The general impression was that here in England had arrived a handful of Indian politicians on an expensive picnic party to mix with English politicians and to fraternise round the camp fire of a political jamboree. The so-called respresentatives of India were selected by the Viceroy, so that only the best behaved among them were sent out here, and the way those delegates jumped in and out of morning and evening dress to which they

were not accustomed, showed from the first that there was going to be a settlement of the Indian problem—a settlement on paper at any rate. Speeches were made about the goodwill that existed between the two countries, and when they parted, it was with tears in their eyes and amid the strains of "Auld Lang Syne."

I do not say that this was true of all our representatives, but it was true of a great many, whose capabilities were abnormally mediocre. And when they found themselves against some of the best English brains that were sitting on the other side, a great many of our delegates realised that they had strayed beyond their depths. So that I got a better idea of the worth of our leaders than I would have done if the Round Table Conferences had been held in surroundings to which our delegates were accustomed. But all this mad rush from party to party, where they spoke to and touched real live peers of the realm, was a bit too much for some of them, especially as a great many of our-so-called Indian leaders would give their souls to be created kinghts. It gives them a feeling of walking on air. As for our baronets, they almost insist that the air they walk on is pure oxygen out of specially constructed hermetically sealed cylinders.

During the days in which the Indian problem held the front page, Mr. Lloyd George paid a visit to the Oxford University Liberal Club. It was an event of

first-class importance for the undergraduate world, and the Union Hall had been borrowed for the occasion. He was dined by the committee of the Club before his address and we sat at a U-shaped table regarding with reverence this venerable figure, who had been "Prime Minister of England in the hour of its greatest crisis". His eyes were sparkling with life, his snow-white hair softened the expression on his face. All through the dinner we looked at him in silent admiration. As soon as coffee was over, the President rose and we made way for our distinguished visitor on his way to the Union Hall. He led the way and the President followed, while we had our backs uncomfortably stuck to the wall to give him room to pass. Slowly he walked past us, looking into the face of each of us. We had unconsciously formed a guard of honour. I watched him coming down the line. He stopped in front of me and said :

" How is India ? "

I do not remember what I said in reply, and what I said could not have been very coherent, for I was taken aback. Maybe if I got that chance again I should reply : " Bloody awful, thank you," and wait to see what he would say next. I feel sure that if this had come to my mind then I would not have hesitated to say it. But would I have said that in India ? Would any respectable young man from a decent family ? Of course not. The right answer

judged by Indian standards should have been: "I am deeply honoured to be asked by your Right Honourable self my humble opinion of the condition of the country to which I have the honour to belong and venture to express the opinion that by the grace of God and the British Government the goal of British policy in India continues to be the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to achieve the much coveted status of a Dominion within the Empire." That seems to be the difference between what I would have said in Oxford and what they would have wanted me to say in India. It gives some idea of the change in attitude to the Indian problem after three and a half years at that University.

Various delegates paid visits to Oxford as guests of the innumerable societies at Oxford—Gandhi, Sapru, Jayakar, Mrs. Naidu, Malaviya and several others. I remember the evening at Oxford when Gandhi had come to the city of cloistered towers to speak to us young Indians who had gone to that shrine to imbibe culture and anarchy. We had gathered in the Town Hall to get a glimpse of the man over whom a veil of mystery hung like a shroud—a veil more difficult to penetrate than those which had obscured Zaharoff and Lawrence of Arabia. Yes, mystery—so it was. No one could fathom his depths. He had come to England as representative of India at the Round Table and the world was

watching his movements and noting his utterances, knowing as it did that on them depended the destinies of two nations and two peoples. Yet he remained quite unperturbed about the responsibilities that rested on his shoulders. Serene, tranquil, like a little child himself, he played with the children of the East End, the children of the slums, and the children of the poor. English people failed to understand him. He was too simple in his utterances, too ascetic in his mode of life, too Christian for the Christians. They had been told that wherever he walked was holy ground and that the teeming millions of India followed him even as they would a new Messiah. Wherever he appeared there was an instinctive realisation of his nebulous presence. I am afraid I was conscious of that too. But I felt that what Oxford wanted was something different, something of the type of highbrow stuff which they got from Sapru and Jayakar and which Oxford lapped up without protest or murmur. Gandhi made no appeal to sophisticated Oxford. Intellectually they were left unsatisfied. Emotionally they were moved. I had a feeling that this great man of India—who was as near the real India as any one man could be—was lost on them, for he was talking in a language which these hard-boiled cynics could not understand. For them, it was merely a source of amusement to see him there in his simple *khaddi* garb—like peering through an old

family album on a wet Sunday afternoon.

My term of office at the Union moved fast. I had aroused a little curiosity and various members who had never before taken the trouble to attend the debates, looked in now and again. I felt a little self-conscious as I walked in every Thursday at eight o'clock in my white tie and tails, leading in the officers and the speakers of the day. Fortunately for me they got used to me sooner than I had expected, or perhaps my self-consciousness died down. They treated me with respect so I never had the chance of playing the martyr. Somehow I had a feeling that they did not regard me as an Indian, as I had wanted them to. To them I was a cosmopolitan, looking a cross between an Egyptian and a South American, something foreign, with the physiognomy of a mulatto, who spoke English reasonably well and with an Oxford drawl when necessary, who went to Paris for the vacations, did the rumba and drove round town in a white M.G. The combination of all these details had made me something different from what they were accustomed to look upon as orthodox Indian. So that I never could judge whether their attitude towards me was the same as their attitude to other Indians. One fact at least I shared in common with my compatriots. I was in spite of everything still regarded as a coloured man, which always fascinated me. I took all that came to me and hit back hard when I could and liked it. When-

ever possible I expressed the point of view of the hundreds of others, who never had that same opportunity.

So that for me the first expression of my self found its birthplace in Oxford. Perhaps it was because I happened to be there at the most impressionable period of my life, perhaps it was because of the surroundings in which I found myself, perhaps the desire to express myself had always been latent and Oxford supplied the push. It is difficult to tell. Somehow I am inclined to associate whatever change I noticed in myself with the period to which it belonged. Later, when I consciously felt what Bergson might have called *élan vital,* driving me on to things I was too afraid to approach, I have wondered whether it was an outside force or just the result of the years at Oxford.

III

"SOCIETY"

ALL THAT HAPPENED AT OXFORD WAS NOT UNDERstood by the India to which I belonged. There I had to stand or fall by my performance in the Civil Service exam. It became apparent that it would soon be farewell to Fifth Avenue. Only in my case it was known as Malabar Hill. That is where all our million dollars were concentrated. Art and genius. Bank balances and a Tower of Silence. That was our society with the capital S. They were the people who sat in judgment over me and cried tut-tut.

Sometimes I feel so ashamed of it all—this so-called cream of society to which I once thought it a privilege to belong. Their lives are so empty of anything that is of real and lasting value. Their contribution to this world is nil. Their existence is without purpose. In the evenings when the sun has set, you see bloated pigmies with gold watch and chain driving down the Cuffe Parade in streamlined cars, purring down the stretch at two miles an hour. Dignity *in excelsis*. You see their women—wives that have been bound to them by the tie of matrimony—sitting next to them bejewelled in

diamond bracelets, with emeralds and rubies filling up the space left blank by their low-cut blouses. These two have met in holy wedlock to produce children to the greater glory of God. One look at them and you stop and think and then rush to the first dictionary you can lay hands on. The word you are looking for is Sterilisation.

Not so long ago an Indian Society lady who knew I had just returned from England asked me what "school" I attended. I pointed out very apologetically that I had just finished Oxford. This interested her intensely. She had been to England and had mixed with the best of English people, she said. She had spent whole week-ends in their country-houses at their invitation. She had been presented at Court, she added. All that, flung at me in rapid succession, easily eclipsed my second at Oxford. Someone then interrupted her long list of social achievements and said that her own son-in-law had also been a product of Oxford. " Oh, no, my dear," she promptly replied, "I ought to know. He was educated at Balliol."

She was one of those marvellous women you encounter in India, who go through life in a limousine, sitting erect with bosoms stuck right out lest anyone should miss seeing the priceless jewels that they are wearing. In the presence of numerous people she gave a gratuitous exposition of the essence of filial duty, which was entirely for my benefit.

Politely I nodded assent and signified agreement with all she said. She seemed very pleased with herself and quoted from two Governors of Bombay straight off the reel. She paused and looked into my eyes as if she could read through me. " You have a girl in England, I suppose," was the verdict. I pointed out that there were lost of girls in England, but....before I had finished, she shook her head in complete disapproval, expounded again on the purity of our race and our noble tradition. I agreed, but she was not content till she had come out with that lovely little phrase "fish out of water." That was her verdict on white women, and she just had to get it out of her system. White women were "fish out of water" in India. I agreed once more, but a tactless youth who was also listening to this conversation shook her complacency by saying : " But it's fish after all." As if struck by lightning, she just crumpled up and her stuck-out breasts receded like a punctured tyre. " My God," I said to myself, "this is the voice of the new India I have longed to hear." But the young man hardly realised the power of his utterance.

I was at that time writing the gossip column of a certain Bombay paper and my three gallant efforts to sneak in this story were "killed" instantaneously. The Indian Press, or rather English papers in India, are so tame they would not hurt a fly. In England and elsewhere the people fear the power of the Press.

One of the most vitriolic outbursts I have read was "Plain Words to the Archbishop," by Mr. James Douglas. A most brilliant piece of invective. It was directed against the Archbishop of Canterbury on his alleged interference at the time of the Abdication of Edward VIII. But in India it is the Press that is afraid of the people. You cannot criticise a hopeless speech by a public figure because the editor is spending a week-end with him next month. You cannot mention the good work done by a certain lady, because the editor's wife was not given a proper place at her dinner party. And these are the sort of people who become editors of some of the leading Indian papers. No first-class Fleet Street journalist would take the job, and the day we have someone in India who is a real newspaper man with some backbone, the circulation of the paper that gets him will be trebled. Meanwhile the Press in India remains a social and not a national affair. You cannot criticise the Government because that is sedition ; you cannot go for the Princes because of the Princes' Protection Act, and how some of them need it.

I remember writing about Mr. Maxton's marriage. I had read somewhere that as a bachelor he used to live in a chummery of three with two equally advanced Socialists. It was the scene of many a hot argument on some of the fundamental problems of life, but in their spare moments they used to amuse themselves playing cut-throat bridge. No doubt, I

said, the bidding was often revolutionary. When the paper was in print, I glanced through the column to find that the sentence about the bidding being revolutionary was deleted. It spoilt the whole story, and if it was chopped off for shortage of space, I thought the sub-editing was bad. Later it struck me, that it was probably " killed " on grounds of policy. " Revolutionary " was a bad word to use. It might put ideas into the heads of the illiterate Indian public. Also it might give the impression that the paper in question had red tendencies and that wouldn't do at all. Society would disapprove of such radicalism, and after all they were the people who could put their hands in their pockets and touch gold.

Yes, these socialites were rich. Their respectability depended on their wealth. They were some of them titled people. It was the only thing they had willingly paid for, not haggling about the price, for Government House, like a good English store, has fixed prices—even though now and again they may have an off-season sale.

Yet for all their efforts at refinement, they are not refined. I do not think they know the difference between *kultur* and culture, between "sophisticated" and "blasé", between love and the casual affair. In their wandering through the wilderness they hit on words like "gigolo" and jump to the conclusion that it has something to do with homosexuality. It is like the Indian gentleman who always blushed when

he ordered hors-d'œuvre, because when he said it, it sounded more like " whores devour us ". Later he went to Paris where he was told he ought to visit the Louvre, if only to see the Venus de Milo. He could not be bothered to go himself, but offered to see the lady at his own hotel. When he was told that it was a statue of a goddess, he decided it would look well in his garden at home, and offered to buy it. But the Louvre were not selling, so the old gentleman contented himself with a marble replica. Months later when he was back in Bombay, a huge crate containing the beautiful lady arrived. He opened it himself, for it was very valuable. But it never adorned his garden, for he sent it back to Paris with a letter complaining that the statue had arrived in a damaged condition and that the arms were missing.

Art they do not understand and nature leaves them cold. They much prefer Laurel and Hardy. The sunsets of Turner have no meaning for them, and the smile of the Mona Lisa they feel they can get for the asking. Of Pater they have never heard. Their excursion into literature does not go further than Maurice Dekobra. They believe that Lawrence of Arabia had something to do with *Sons and Lovers*, that Shaw was really Shakespeare, and that Hamlet should have had a better ending.

Sometimes they go to concerts and listen to Schubert. The symphonies of Beethoven they attribute to Wagner. The music of Bach they think

is for tuning. They dislike the Ballet because of the jumping. They have never heard of Massine and Markova. They only know the man on the flying trapeze.

They are poor in intellect. Their politics are hopelessly muddled. Their reading of the papers does not go further than the headlines and they refuse to read Karl Marx because they think he is like the rest of the Marx Brothers. Yet they drive through the city like centuries-foretold messiahs with a halo twinkling round their diamond shirt-studs and their only message to humanity is that their shirts come from Sulka. The house of Sulka is famous in three great capitals for its shirts and its *moirées* ties. To buy from Sulka is a very pleasant luxury, but among the Upper Four Hundred in India a Sulka label is the true hall-mark of a gentleman.

One evening I was entrusted with the task of seeing some of our guests leave after a dinner party at our flat, and I escorted each couple as they were ready to depart, rang for the lift and accompanied them downstairs. On one such excursion down in the lift, I turned to the gentleman I was escorting and apologising for my impertinence, remarked about the smartness of his black tie.

" It's from Sulka," he proudly said.

" It's very nice," I replied.

" My shirt is also from Sulka."

" Really ? "

" I buy most of my things from Sulka."

" That must be very nice."

As we got out of the lift on the ground floor, he leant over and very confidentially whispered into my ears : " Even my underpants." Then I knew what it must feel like to be a gentleman through and through—a luxury not all of us can afford.

There is a story of a well-known Indian gentleman who had donated something like a hundred pounds at a charitable function held in London. Sometime during the evening the President announced the donation and an appreciative gathering cheered the announcement. Thereupon up jumps my fellow countryman, smiles approvingly at those around him and doubles his gift. There is more cheering and he gets up a third time to raise his bid. Eventually he sat down having outbid his own bid three times in the genuine belief that he was doing the right thing to establish for himself a permanent place in the very heart of English Society. He would come to a wedding as a guest and as is the Indian custom eat with his fingers off a plantain leaf. Later, when he had washed his hands, he would pull out a hundred rupee note (about seven pound ten) and in a loud voice ask for the manager of the catering firm. In the presence of everyone and much to the embarrassment of his host he would give instructions that this should be divided among the servants. Anywhere else his manners would be regarded as positively

disgusting, but in India it is regarded as a privilege of Society.

I made up my mind one day in Madras to pay a visit to Government House, where, after all, I had a right to expect all that is best in Indian Society. I called and signed my name in the visitors' book. My occupation I left blank. An imposing looking card with a crown embossed in gold arrived a few days later and I rolled up in the blazing sun about four o'clock in the afternoon to what is euphemistically called a Garden Party. On the windscreen of *our* car appeared in large red letters P.E. (Private Entry), but it made little difference, for we all entered by the same gate and there was the same confusion at the entrance to the garden.

When I am invited to any function, I expect my host to be there to receive me. Yet when we got there, I saw a few hundred guests gathered on the lawn, not knowing what to do or where to go. We waited for something to happen. Two A.D.C.'s were rushing up and down the lawn, when from the distance I heard the strains of the National Anthem and we all stood at attention and looked loyal. His Excellency the Governor emerged from the building, preceded by a quarter dozen men in uniform and followed by a quarter dozen others in grey morning dress and carrying toppers. Over red carpet they walked to the furthest corner of the grounds where a *shamiana* was erected and six of the A.D.C.'s lined

up by the side of the Governor and the guests queued up to be presented to him. Behind him stood the surgeon in attendance, which was not saying very much for the guests. So we were presented, one by one, our names being read out from a card we carried to show we were not gate-crashers. Then we moved to the refreshment bar, where the scene was like that of a bunch of school-boys scrambling for a free helping of ice-cream on Founder's Day. When the Governor had finished hand-shaking he came to where we had assembled to partake of his own hospitality. He smiled vaguely at some of us and proceeded to sit at the only table in the grounds. From the four hundred odd guests he sent for about half a dozen and invited them to his table. But the rest of us stood around and watched our host sitting comfortably at a table. And that was Society in India.

It would be impertinent of me to criticise the manners of the high and the mighty. But there was in me a feeling of humiliation at the treatment given to us by those who were paid out of Indian revenues to entertain us. Maybe some day someone will explain this away, but it is because our Society is so much in the habit of toadying to those in high places that we continue to sign our names at Government House to be treated like a herd of cattle and allowed to pasture on those sacred grounds. But nobody among all those important people who were

present dared to say anything. One false move and the chance of being made a Khan Bahadur would be gone for ever. Or maybe they would have to pay a little more for their knighthood.

That is the sort of Society that lives in the smart houses of our Fifth Avenue. They are a community perpetually bickering, living in glass houses shooting peanuts at each other. There is no purpose in their banal existence. They float on the stream and are carried hither and thither with the tide. Public opinion is one of their gods, and they are always afraid of what people will say. Nothing ever happens to them. Like the Tower of Pisa, they are always on the verge of destruction, yet only on the verge. The trouble about our Society is that it gets nowhere. Here to-day but not gone to-morrow. They neither live nor let live. They are phantoms-gaudy phantoms—expensive illusions. In the land of the living they are mere tourists. They die natural deaths, and no memories are left behind.

I think now of London, Paris, Vienna. Cities of the West, cities of vice, cities of refuge. I think of the Cote d'Azur, the South of France, Deauville. I think of the Pyrenees and the Dalmatian coast—of the Swiss mountains laden with snow—of the blue Mediterranean and summer skies. Each has its society. Each has its coterie of smart people. But something happens to these people. They feel such emotions as love and passion. The evidence

against them in the Divorce Courts bears testimony to that. But Indian Society with all its environment, with all its picturesque setting, with all its Anglicised-Orientalism, leaves me cold. For years we young men have acquiesced in all they have said and done. But even the worm does turn when the iron enters the soul.

They are a mean crowd and there is a trace of sadism in them. Mental sadism—they would not understand the other. They get pleasure by causing pain to others. You treat them decently and they spit in your face. But kick them in the pants and they will lick your boots.

Everywhere you read of their generous donations to charity, but what they give is not for the sake of giving. Their superciliousness makes poverty immoral. The way in which they give is demeaning both to themselves and to the persons to whom they give. The obligation is always emphasised and the man who takes feels like a piece of dirt in their presence.

With the change that has come over the rest of India, Society still endeavours to cling to conceptions which have become obsolete. Only in the eyes of Society, these conceptions continue to supply the guiding principles of their existence. It is pathetic to see them living in this fool's paradise, when the chances are that in the next few years they will be wiped off the face of India. Their position in India

is similar to that of the noble families in Czarist Russia on the eve of the Revolution.

All through their lives they have given orders and expressed opinions, and they have expected young men to say "Yes, sir," to everything they say. When we do not, they are amazed. They shake their heads in disapproval, and call us ungrateful. So it happened one afternoon when I had been asked by the Rotary Club of Bombay to speak to them. The Rotary movement is the parlour game of the bourgeoisie in India. Once a week they arrive punctually at one o'clock for lunch, their name and profession pinned on to the lapels of their coats and they listen to one or other of them speaking inaudibly on the History of Bombay or reminiscencing about a trip to England or America. Nothing else ever happens. Nothing else is expected to happen. So they asked me at short notice to take a place that was left blank on their programme card.

When I arrived, I noticed the look of perfect boredom on the faces of those who were to form the intelligent audience. They were most of them twice my age and had known me ever since they could remember. In their greeting they were frightfully patronising, and I could see they still believed that little children should be seen and not heard. All through lunch I hardly touched a morsel. I just wanted to get it over and done with. I watched them while they ate. Smug, complacent, well-fed,

nothing worried them. They did not know that Italy had declared war on Abyssinia and that the League of Nations was suffering from double pneumonia. They only knew that Tata Ordinary had improved and that Broach Cotton had remained steady. As soon as lunch was over the President arose and after a few remarks about the day's collection, he announced the "speaker of the day." He said I needed no introduction, and then proceeded to introduce me. He used words like honour and privilege and finally decided he would not stand any longer between the speaker and the audience, which really did not care whether I spoke or not. They had their lunch and put their contributions in the collection box, so they had fulfilled two of the cardinal principles of Rotary.

I began. First there were occasional burps from the lunchers who were digging into their teeth with tooth-picks for little bits and pieces which had slipped into the crevices. Then a little laughter from those who thought I had said something funny, but then a grim silence came over the room and colour came into the faces of my elders. I raised my eyebrows, put a diabolic curve on my mouth and tried to look more cynical than ever. At the end of it I turned to the President, who had been uncomfortably fingering his collar, and said: "And so, Mr. President, the struggle goes on between my generation and yours. It is a pathetic picture,

but I would like you to visualise it. It is the picture of a young man standing at the cross-roads of his life. The night is dark and the storm in its fury has blown down the sign-post over the ways, and the young man does not even remember by which road he originally came. I have seen this happen time and again. I have seen young men in the prime of their life, bristling with ideas, charged with the soul force of their generation, come out here with the hope of great futures and the great things they are going to do. I have seen these same young men, still in the prime of their youth, walking with their heads bent low, their spirits crushed, their efforts at creation frustrated, their individuality killed, marching to a dead march like an army on the Siberian desert, trailing like pallid phantoms across the grey dawn. Yet is there a word of regret in your faces? No. You chuckle as you see the grim procession pass and all you say is: 'We told them so'. And having passed judgment, you lean back in your chairs, maybe to look at the water lapping against the shore, maybe to smoke your cigar in the comfort of your palatial homes, maybe only to wait for the next moment as old men would."

When I sank down in my chair, I felt like a little boy who had been warned not to ask for cake, and who had carried out the instructions too literally by stretching for it across the length of the table to

the embarrassment of everyone present. But he had got his cake whatever may be the consequences. Now I hung my head and did not dare to look at anyone in the face. Politely they applauded. Then the President got up and congratulated me on a "most amusing speech". Nor did he, I discovered later, intend to be funny. Instead they all got together and asked each other what everything meant, and said the boy had guts, and decided to like my speech after all. Then I realised that to speak to any section of Society was only waste of breath. They could not possibly be infuriated because all the big words I had used they construed as compliments to themselves, and after all there was to be another lunch and another speaker who would probably say nice things about them next week, so what did it matter anyway? Much to my annoyance the only criticism by those who heard it was that my way of speaking was good, and if they closed their eyes they could not tell whether it was an Englishman speaking. It gave me some idea by what standards I shall be judged in the future. It does not matter what you say, so long as you say it like an Englishman. It was the goal to which Society in India was striving. And those were the people who were to dictate morality and to interpret for me the theory of life, and truth and beauty.

IV

TABOO

I WAS GOING UP THE STEPS OF THE TAJ MAHAL HOTEL in Bombay to attend a joint meeting of the Indian and European Progressive Groups, which were recently inaugurated in order "to bring about a better understanding between the two people." It may seem strange but I had even helped to formulate the constitution of the Indian group, because of the earnestness of purpose shown by those who met in private rooms at the Taj and discussed the policy of the group over quantities of orange juice and whisky. There were a few who certainly were keen on rallying the younger intelligentsia to their side, and on organising a body of opinion from among the young which could be felt to some purpose. But there were many who did not know the first thing about politics or how a meeting should be conducted, and who were there merely because they regarded it a social asset to belong to a political group which met in the Taj.

On this particular evening the speaker of the evening was a Parsee baronet, by name Cowasji Jehangir, once a member of the Governor's Execu-

tive Council in Bombay, for which he was created a knight, before he stepped into the baronetcy at his father's death. He was now a member of the Legislative Assembly, where he voiced the Liberal point of view, and recently was elected the chief spokesman of that same Liberal Party.

I knew Sir Cowasji Jehangir when I was quite young. I had heard of him when I was even younger. He had taken pictures of me with his own camera in the days when I was regarded as a "decent" boy! But a lot of things had happened since then and I had that indelible mark on my character which the failure at the Civil Service had caused. I had also made a veiled reference to him in a speech at the Bombay Rotary Club, where I spoke of "two headlights of the Liberal Party casting deceptive shadows in the darkness of our political faiths and always playing for safety first, the most pestilente all heresies". I do not know whether that came to his ears, for he was not present at that meeting and whether he took it very much to heart, but he never again offered to take more pictures of me.

As I walked up the steps of the Taj that evening, accompanied by a lady, I ran into him on his way to deliver his oration. As was expected of me, I raised my hat to him, for he was my senior by many years. He looked at me, then at the lady with me and did not reciprocate my greeting. It is quite possible that he never saw me, for a man is very often

preoccupied with his thoughts and what he is going to say. I wish I could believe that, but at that moment I certainly did not.

I never felt so insulted in all my life, more especially as my salutation was both cordial and respectful. But I held the last trump, for I had previously been asked by the President to move the vote of thanks. I felt the instinct of revenge, sitting through that hour and a quarter of dull, monotonous drivel which poured out from this leader of the Liberal Party, who was interpreting to us the new Constitution. His speech was devoid of humour, which was expected., and he went into the details of the Constitution with the precision of a second rate college professor. But what he said gave me little scope for attack for he had stuck to facts and figures and refrained from expressing opinions, except on the most unimportant issues. I knew then that all I could do would be to move the vote of thanks as it was always done in India "thanking the speaker for the most illuminating address we have ever heard". That I was not prepared to do. No man who had insulted me only an hour ago was going to get a vote of thanks that was anything like a vote of thanks. I waited and the gods were kind.

Towards the end of his long speech, he could not refrain from making some comment on the Liberal Party of which he was the newly-elected President.

It had very little to do with the subject on which he was speaking, but his election must have preyed on his mind and he spoke of what disaster the Indian people would have to face if that new Constitution fell into the hands of the Congress who were out to wreck it, and that the Liberal Party was therefore the only salvation of the peoples of India. He sat down, mopped his brow, and later answered a few questions which were put to him. The audience was fast diminishing and the President soon called upon me to move the vote of thanks. What happened then I do not exactly remember, but I know that I gave him all I had and felt sorry I could not think of more. I was glad to get it off my chest, and I hope that it will make him and others like him realise that if courtesy is expected from us, then we too have the right to expect courtesy from him and his generation, and if we are expected to raise our hats, then we expect them to do the same.

But everything I had said was strictly parliamentary and above board, though it was I confess very unkind. When I finished he jumped up from his seat, and proceeded to deliver a vindication of himself and his party, and concluded or began by wishing I would gain in experience, and something else and SANITY ! That from a man of his years and his long political experience was, I thought, not in the best of taste, but it was to be excused in the case of a man who had always had young men saying

"yes" to everything he said. It was a shock to him to hear for the first time what some young men really thought of him and his politics, a shock which at that stage in his political career can be quite disturbing.

But was it done? Did and would orthodox opinion approve of a young man who had ventured to criticise a real live Parsee baronet, who is *ipso facto* the undoubted leader of the community to which he belongs? In that respect, political power, respectability, wisdom, learning are all presumed in favour of any individual whose status can justify such a presumption. No, sir, it just wasn't done in India, they told me.

But I have committed, I regret to say, quite a number of major and minor *faux pas,* though I have long since ceased to worry about them. Those who have judged me have revealed a mentality so poor that they have forfeited the right to judge me or anyone else. I remember the day after I arrived in Bombay for one of my long vacations. The voyage had exhausted my supply of dress shirt and when I landed I was dreadfully short of clothes. I was asked to dine at the Taj, where a negro orchestra from Paris was swinging it high and low. Hot music had come to town. There was Leon Abbey from the Ambassadeur in Paris, Dizzy from the Chez Florence and any number of them playing the sort of music which leaves you wondering whether there were ever any ants in your pants!

Dress was essential, though there was no hard and fast rule as to the colour of my shirt. I go into a short sleeved pale-blue Celanese sport shirt, stuck a black dress-bow on top, and stepped into the Taj as if it was quite normal to appear in a pale-blue silk shirt with a dinner jacket. I had only just come back from England, and the so-called leaders of Bombay fashion, who studied the catalogues of Izod and Sulka from cover to cover, were still a little hesitant about challenging me, lest some late-final edition of "Man and His Clothes" had decreed in my favour. But they hated the idea that I may have stolen a march upon them, and that worried them. It was not in keeping with the Bombay *tempo*. It was not even " decent ".

The music went to my head that evening, and when Leon started beating up a rumba, I left my table and my partner to shake the *marachas* that were offered to me. In those few moments I forgot my whole upbringing, forgot I was back in the land of my fathers, through which the Ganges flowed and that the Seine was far far away.

Early next morning, my father came to my room and asked me whether the charges against me were true. "Charges" was perhaps the appropriate word, for some three or four people had rung up early in the morning to inform the fond parents of the behaviour of their son. It just wasn't done !

I thought then of Paris, that adorable capital of

France and of the evenings on those boulevards of accomplished dreams. That New Year's Eve—1932 I think it was—when we took the lid off—ripped it—and painted the town red. We were only two of us—a young Englishman, who was anything but English, having run away from the comfort of his father's home, because it was too smug and complacent, too boring for a young man with ideals, having driven a lorry at Billingsgate for a pound a week, and later worked his way to a good job in the Paris branch of a well-known American firm—and there was myself. We had been asked to join a smart party, but preferred to slum on our own—slumming in comfort, slumming in all that was chic and chi-chi. We called it slumming, for we were a brace of modest young men. The memory of that particular evening still lingers—that brief imitation of rugger with our top hats down the Champs Elysées—that cordial handshake with the *agent* on point duty in the middle of the Place de 'l Opera and the dislocation of traffic that followed—that solo exhibition of the rumba at the Habanera, for which we received a bottle of champagne with the compliments of the management—that crazy note to Nina Mae Mckinney, that talented singer and quite the most beautifully dressed woman in Paris at that time. She sang at the Chez Florence, which was the haunt of celebrities and the royalty that visited Paris. I had watched her come in and

wondered to which party she belonged. But she went straight to the raised dais and began to sing a soft Harlem melody, while the whole *boite* listened to her in silent adoration. In the middle of one of her songs, she opened the note, read it, then burst out into an hysteria of laughter, which puzzled every one present. Even I wondered what could have happened, till she came up asking: "Which is the guy with fuzzy hair ?" All that was Paris and never to be forgotten.

But what if we had stopped to think whether it was done, whether orthodoxy would approve of it, or what its repercussion would he in the India to which I belonged ? The urge from within, natural in a man of my years, cannot give way to a handful of puritans, who are so sex-starved that they justify their existence by making a virtue out of necessity and by preaching a philosophy of life, when they have not even danced on the fringe of it.

Yes, orthodoxy in India is very fond of preaching morality and of laying down the standard of moral virtue. So it was too when a Parsee girl was to play the lead in a play with a Hindoo as her leading man. It was an amateur performance in aid of charity, and the cast was drawn chiefly from young people from the University. It was eminently respectable and as in all Indian drama there was nothing more in it than merely holding hands.

On the eve of the performance an outraged old gentleman wrote letters to the Press and to the father of the young lady in question, deploring the fact that a Parsee girl would be playing opposite a Hindoo boy. No sir, it wasn't done. It was bordering on immorality, the corruption of the young—and it fell to the lot of some outraged old gentleman to put his foot down. There is more than a section in my community, which holds these depressingly orthodox views. They are, I regret to say, a disgrace to us and to the India to which they unfortunately belong.

Mostly uneducated, but fairly well-to-do people, they have lived their lives in the narrow confines of repression and there is no love not any decent sexual emotion that has ever emanated from them, but only stench and ugly children. They cook large meals for themselves and when they have gorged their fat abdomens, they belch with sanctimonious piety before going to the Fire Temple to wash away their sins. From a book they utter prayers which they do not understand. For that is done. It is in fact eminently respectable. They link it up with salvation and the soul, and they keep in reasonable comfort an illiterate clergy, which can repeat the long prayers by heart, so that the wrath of God may not fall too heavily on them.

What is true of my community—the Parsees—is equally true of all the others. This peculiar bias

against any form of modernism in the expression of human emotion masquerades in the name of orthodoxy. It is to be seen in all phases of Indian life. It is the only explanation for the existence in India of fetishes and ceremonials, of superstition and strange beliefs, of illiteracy and of Imperial domination, of the stagnation of the entire energy of a whole people. It leaves us with the depressing spectacle of poverty, because orthodoxy has decreed against any radical changes in the existing social order. Untouchability–child-marriages—*deva-dasis* have existed so long in India, because of the power of orthodox Indian opinion.

Not very long ago, the death occurred in India of F. E. Dinshaw. He had one of the finest brains that India could boast of. Like the late Lord Birkenhead, he was known more affectionately by his initials F. E. He was a man of infinite capacity, and though he never liked the limelight, his power in India was always felt. The respect which his countrymen had for him was unanimous. His word carried great weight and there is a story told of him which illustrates the man. F. E. was responsible for the career of many young men, who had gone to him for help and had got it. On this particular occasion he took a young man with him to the head of one of the banks of India. The manager greeted the young man and smilingly said: "So, you want a job here". Mr. Dinshaw interrupted and in his in-

comparable manner said : " Oh, no, I merely asked him to look around and decide for himself what job he wants". Such was the power of the man, so great was his self-assurance. But he was a Parsee, and as such his ultimate destination was Tower of Silence to which the dead carcasses are carried to be devoured by vultures and the bones dissolved in the well with strong acid. But it was the one great wish of his life that he should be buried beside his wife to whom he was deeply attached and who had died before him. As it was, he had against orthodox opinion arranged for her burial in his own grounds at Poona. But what he could do, no one else could. His son, who was then in London, made several frantic efforts over the 'phone to Bombay, to make his father's wish possible. I was in his room at that time and can vouch for his efforts. But there was not one person amongst the so-called leaders of the Parsee Community—friends and relations of F. E.—who was prepared to go against Parsee orthodox opinion and risk the unpopularity that would ensue by carrying out F.E.'s wish. It shows the stuff some of our men are made of and the almost frightening power of orthodoxy in India. Personally I felt sad that a man who had done so much for his country and who was held in such high esteem by his fellow-men should be denied the right to choose the way of disposing of his own body.

Orthodoxy has robbed many young people of the happiness that was their due, for it hits hard below the belt when anyone has dared to go against it. It is on these same grounds considered somewhat immoral for a Hindoo girl to want to marry a Mohammedan or a Parsee boy, even though the two young people are desperately in love with each other. And the same applies to any boy or girl who wants to marry out of the community to which he or she may happen to belong. The orthodox outlook on life has refused to adjust itself to new conditions and the result is that only those who have the courage to face a hostile world, take the plunge—sometimes to drown, sometimes to find the happiness that is their due. Often they have to resort to a secret elopement, and even then they are hounded down like criminals, and the stout puritans sit and gloat over the unhappiness that they have succeeded in causing to these two iconoclasts, and go on to preach the moral that intermarriages can never be happy. Such is the power of orthodoxy in India.

It is a great thing to have an elephant's strength, but it is inhuman and degrading to use that force. But orthodoxy does not seem to think so. It has taken upon itself the responsibility of safeguarding the morals of anyone and everyone they can lay hands upon, basing their morality not on the laws of God, but on the obsolete conventions of primitive

caste, on superstitions and beliefs which no sane and sensible person living in this age should tolerate, and they hold up their own selves as patterns of virtue to substantiate the philosophy they preach.

Security—yes. That word mean so much in India. It has been preached as the gospel of youth, whereas I have always regarded it as the refuge of age. It has no fascination for me, though the struggle to assert myself becomes grimmer every day. But there are hundreds of other young men who have sacrificed every spark of individuality to attain that degree of security which is regarded as the condition precedent to marriage and in order to face the world on their own. It is the first thing that is expected of us—the one thing that orthodoxy has decreed that every father should expect from his son.

I still remember arguing on this point with one of my father's friends whom I respect. He was impressing upon me the need for embracing security because our family resources were somewhat limited. I can still see him leaning back in his director's chair in the House of Tatas and trying hard to knock some sense into my rebelling head. I always listened to him with respect because H. P.'s own life and career was different from what he preached. He had taken more chances in life than one should expect from a disciple of the philosophy of security. It was really inconsistent with what he was telling

me then, but he had some allegiance to my father which took first place over his allegiance to young men and to himself. So that although I never believed a word of what he said, I always admired him for trying. Fortunately H. P. had a great sense of humour. Unlike other leaders of thought in India, H. P. always tried to understand the other man's point of view. And when I once wrote to him to say that I was a little disappointed that this idea of hugging security should come from him, who had on several occasions discarded security to assert his individual self, he was gallant enough to acknowledge that I had an argument he could not refute, and then to justify his attempt to instil security into me he modestly said that his success was merely due to the fortunate combination of circumstances. I hope one day I too will be able to say the same—a fortunate combination of circumstances—for there is to be no security for me for a long time.

On this question of security, I cannot help narrating what happened in Paris on my long journey from Bombay to the English capital, where the Bar Finals were waiting to receive my urgent attention. It is one of those things that happen to you once in a lifetime and never again. It is almost a short story. But it is one of those which orthodoxy in India will regard as immoral, and the telling of it is perhaps in shocking taste. Be that as it may, this one little episode fills up a great deal

of the emptiness of my life, and I often think about it when I feel depressed, disillusioned and on the verge of being beaten.

The P & O. liner *Strathaird,* which brought me from Bombay, had berthed at Marseilles. The gangway went up. I caught hold of one of the porters as they poured in. I had my luggage collected and rushed through the ceremonial of passport and customs to catch the early morning train to Paris.

As I sat in the compartment, I took stock of myself. I had got up from a death-bed, and had been a source of much anxiety to my parents through the long months when I was fighting diphtheria. The idea of seeing Paris again had given me new life. It was like going from one home to another, not knowing where I really belonged. Intellectually I felt I belonged to the West, emotionally to the East. It was a queer mixture. Somehow they blended in me.

I was twenty-five—an Oriental who had lived the most impressionable part of my life in the West. I knew Paris well. As the train slowed down some twelve hours later at the outskirts of Paris, I recalled my previous visits. Twenty-three I counted. This was a fair estimate, for a two-months' stay and a short week-end were each counted as a visit.

In the corridor of the train I leant against the window-rail. The cold outside had frosted the glass and the familiar lights of Paris were blurred out of

sight. On other occasions I had felt flurried, anxious, restless. Then I had something to look forward to. Now there was only Paris on the other side. Paris would always be there. So there seemed to be no hurry. It was merely a change of outlook, probably brought about by diphtheria germs, probably by my own self.

At the Gare de Lyon, through the crowd I fought my way to a taxi and drove to the Etoile—to the little apartment in the rue de Faubourg St. Honoré which I liked to call my *garçonniére.*

The fresh water in which I bathed was a change after a fortnight on board. A clean shave, clean shirt, and I felt a different man—refreshed after a long journey, ready for the night. I felt the blood running in my veins. I felt young.

Outside in the streets the cabs raced on the boulevards, pulling up abruptly with a screeching of brakes. Fast driving, a sniff of danger, pulling up just in time and on again—faster, faster.

That evening I rang up P——. He was a great friend of mine. But P——was out and all I could do was to leave a message. I went alone to the gaily lit Café Triomphe. I sat listening to the music from a troupe of Cossacks tinkling on the strings of balalaikas, and sipped my first Pernot in many months. After midnight I took a taxi to Montmartre. In the Cloche d'Or I had a *plat du jour* and a carafe of wine. Around me were the old faces

I had not forgotten. Faces I had seen years ago—some lifted, some fallen. New faces too. Fresh stock. But they did not interest me. They seemed all alike—as if they all came from the same fifth rib. That was my attitude to women—my attitude even to life.

Later that night I went to Melody's Bar. The *maître d'hôtel* had changed, but the same middle-aged, prosperous looking lady at the cash desk greeted me with her usual smile. She had seen me there on each of my twenty-three visits, and knew my habits well, knew the champagne I ordered, knew even my taste in women. I got up and danced. The rumba had still remained a speciallity of this *boite* of Paris, and now the even more primitive rhythm of the Congo was creeping into this citadel of hot music. But nothing seemed right.

When I got back to my apartment in the early hours of the morning I made up my mind to catch the ten o'clock 'plane to London. Paris did not feel the same.

As early as eight the telephone rang. P——had got the message, when he got in late at night. Over the 'phone P—— did most of the talking. He would not hear of my leaving before Monday and then we could fly together as P——had some short business in London. It was all fixed. We would meet for tea at Webers, for it was a Saturday and the offices would close early. That was the

arrangement. I merely acquiesced. I was too tired to argue. I turned over when P—— rang off and fell asleep till noon, when the concierge rang me as she always did, and asked whether breakfast was for one or for two. It was so much like the Paris I knew. Coffee and rolls, even though just for one.

I had a late lunch. As I stepped out of the Chez Kormiloff in the rue d'Armeil, there was still an hour for P——'s tea appointment, so I took a cab and drove along the Elysées when the mad idea crossed my mind and I asked the driver to take me to the Louvre. It was my first visit. I felt I ought to be ashamed I had not been there before, but there had never been any place in my Paris diary for museums of Art. I had never seen Paris or any other capital in the orthodox way, and conducted tours I found revolting.

I decided what I wanted to see in the short time at my disposal. First came the Mona Lisa, and that smile of hers Pater had raved about. Then the El Grecos. There was only one thing more I wanted to see, but no one seemed to know where it was. The attendants looked at each other in bewilderment. They had worked there for years, but they had never heard of Helen of Troy. Yet I was positive she was there.

For a while I wandered through the long corridors. Other priceless treasures passed me, but I would not stop to look at them. Down a flight of stairs I

descended. Half-way was a stone likeness of a pair of wings. It was very famous, but somehow it did not interest me. Time was too short and P——would be waiting. I turned right at the bottom of the stairs. The long corridor was empty except for a statue at the far end. There she stood before me, but it was the Venus de Milo I really wanted. Only my mind was confused, and I kept asking for her by the wrong name. I stopped and looked at her. It was a silhouette of grace and femininity, a study in style and deportment. From where I stood, it was perfect and the manœuvring of lines was clever. The way she stood—her weight on one leg, her arms broken to relieve her from the embarrassment of deciding how to hold them, her breasts naked, her raiment on the verge of slipping down, though only on the verge; the way she looked—wistfully, far away, upwards; all this the lines suggested.

I came nearer. Step by step I drew closer to the cold stone, till I saw the curve of her breasts and the navel chiselled out of stone, the dents and the flaws. I walked round her. The neck was slightly thick and there was a curve in her back—a suggestion of a stoop. There was nothing delicate about this woman. She could not possibly look elegant in silk satins and dim lights would not suit her complexion. As wife, mother, mistress, I pictured her, but she did not appeal to me as anything more than a casual

affair, and that prompted solely by curiosity. There were hundreds of other women who attracted me more than she did. With that thought I left her, not saying any good-bye.

Back down the passage, I walked till I came to the bottom of that same long flight of steps. I stopped and turned and all down my warm body a cold shudder ran. Something electric passed through me and I closed my eyes. The image I saw was one of lines and curves of a beautiful feminine figure, which I could hardly believe was the same woman. Perhaps all women were like that—to be admired only from a distance. For in its true perspective the coarseness of the Venus had faded, her body seemed frail and delicate and even beautiful. Though chiselled out of stone, she seemed to breathe like a living being. But she was full of more than life. She had a spark of divinity which made her immortal, for she was a goddess. So the legends said and they were true.

I left her and dashed away to Weber's where P—— was waiting for me. We sat and talked about everything that had happened since I met him last, and that was a year ago. We talked even about the de Milo, whom I described as cold and big and naked, and he remarked that there was something radically wrong with me, for I used to react differently to women. Perhaps there *was* something wrong for I felt the ground slipping from under my feet—lack

of security, the strength of the opposition from all orthodox opinion which I had encountered in India to such an extent that even my physique gave way in face of the opposition, and I had felt my knees tottering though it was only the after effect of diphtheria. But I felt beaten, and for that there was only one thing to blame—orthodox opinion—that look in the faces of those who said "No" to everything that went against their grain and who nipped in the bud every effort that showed signs of individuality or original thought. All that made me withhold from certain things, because they diverted me from the path of security.

That evening we met again after dinner. We drove again to Montmartre. It was Saturday night and the *boites* were full and there was little room for dancing. At the *Don Juan*, we joined a party of P——'s friends and drank champagne. I felt restless. We paid and P——and I went to Melody's. There was not an empty table, not an inch of room at the bar. But the *maitre d'hotel* came rushing over and made room for us. The atmosphere was stifling, and in spite of the beautiful women at adjacent tables I was feeling bored. Everything seemed too insecure for my liking. It was getting to be an obsession with me. I thought in terms of security. Either a thing was insecure, in which case I hesitated to approach it, or it was secure, and then I found it dull and monotonous. We left

and went slumming in the *bistros*, eating ham sandwiches of coarse crisp bread. Around us the *poules* sat, sipping their coffee, waiting for a rendezvous.

I retired for a moment to the *toilet*, and when I returned I found two guests at our table. They had thrust themselves on P——, who thought it was fun to talk to them. In terms of security they failed deplorably, but what could I expect from women who lived from day to day not knowing where the next man would come from. Still I talked to the one to whom I was expected to talk. She was very young— hardly twenty. Her eyes betrayed her youth. Even so she had seen a lot of life, and been knocked about quite a bit. She had had fluctuations of fortune. Her clothes were expensive, but the collar of her silk blouse was dirty. Her finger nails had varnish on them, but they had chipped off in places. Her perfume was from Guerlain, but the lining of her bag was torn and shabby. Soon she would be old and wrinkles would disfigure her face. There would be black rings under her eyes and the freshness of youth would fade away. She would go the way of all over-used flesh. She would rot and decay. It was altogether too insecure a prospect. It was sordid, grim, and even sad. To take her to bed would be like drinking to get sober. I left P——to look after the two of them, partly because I was bored, but chiefly because I was just

incapable of looking at life any other way. Security had done that to me.

Next day I drove with P——in the Bois. It was after lunch. The sun was out and there was a nip in the air. A cool fresh breeze blew on our sleepy faces. P——told me all that happened when I had left. We spent the whole of that lazy Sunday afternoon and the greater part of the evening calling on his friends. We parted late that night, after a coffee in a café in the Place des Ternes. We had to catch the 'plane next morning, and we felt we could both do with a bit of sleep. I took a taxi and came home. Queer face that driver had. There was a look of perfect content on his countenance. It was as still as the night. He pulled up along my apartment in the rue de Faubourg St. Honoré. For want of something better to say, I asked him how far it was to Montmartre. I knew the distance so well, but I just wanted to hear him say something. "Nothing is too far," the old man replied, "if the heart desires it."

It shook me. My energy returned and the desire to live. Faith. Love. I put my money back in my pocket and asked him to drive me to Montmartre. I did not want to go there. It was just that I wanted to feel the crisp air on my face and to awaken to life again. At the Place Pigale I got out. I tipped the driver handsomely, not so much for his driving as for his random utterances, which were

worth double the fare. I wandered round the *boites*. It was quieter than the day before and most of the night clubs were deserted. I went in once again to Melody's. I stood at the bar, chating to the middle-aged lady at the cash desk, admiring her square-cut diamond ring. I sent a drink to some lonesome woman near me—one more to the madame at the cash desk and one for the barman.

I looked across the room, watched the people. At a table at the far end sat four women. They were obviously dancers. All except one, who looked a little different. She seemed more prosperous. Life had been kinder to her, I thought, than it had been to the others. She wore a smart afternoon dress, silver foxes, and a chic little black hat. She looked unaffected in spite of her expensive clothes. Once or twice she got up and danced, but only with one of the women at her table. When she passed near me, I thought she smiled. Subtly too—no one else saw.

I thought I could place her easily. She was obviously expensive but she had a price like all the others. Yet it was none of my business as I had no use for her. I finished my drink. It was nearly three in the morning and my eyes were full of sleep. I asked for my hat and coat, paid the bill and crossed the floor towards the exit door. As I was leaving, one of the women from the table at the far end came up to me and said: "Pardon, Monsieur

mais je veux causer avec vous." I must have misunderstood "causer", or mine must have been a one-track mind, for I replied rather indifferently: " Pas ce soir, je suis fatigué." She told me then that she merely wanted to convey a message to me. I realised then it was "causer" she had said, not "coucher", and I stopped and she gave me the message which came from the smartly dressed little woman in their party, who had smiled at me. She wanted to meet me, but as it might embarrass me to come up to their table, I was given her name and address with a request to ring her the next day. Her name sounded beautiful, and I was a little surprised at the address, which was one of the more expensive hotels of Paris.

I was leaving for London in the morning and regretted I could not comply with the request. The woman who had brought the message did not believe me. To convince her I showed her my ticket. She led me by the arm to the table at the far end. She uttered a few words of Spanish. I was vaguely introduced and the young woman at the table offered her hand to greet me.

She was dark, a Latin type, well-bred, *soignée*, soft, delicate, a little shy, almost naive and she contrasted sharply with the junk that was around her. She was extremely attractive in a quiet way. I stared at her for quite a while—into eyes which

showed pain. I cannot recollect all that was said, but she asked me to have a drink with her before went away. I had had enough already, and I knew it was usual for a woman to ask a man to have a drink so that he would feel obliged to pay for the whole bottle. I was not going to fall for that and I very politely asked to be excused.

" You are not angry with me, are you ? " she said.

" Not at all, why should I be ? "

" Well, never mind, but will you do me a favour ? I have a request to make."

" Certainly, what can I do for you ? "

" Dance with me once before you go."

I took off my coat, put down my hat and took her on to the floor. We danced silently to a tango. I felt her supple body in my arms. I looked into those eyes again. Yes, they were full of suffering and sorrow. She broke the silence.

" You will probably think me cheap and common. I have behaved like that. Maybe you are right to think so. But for three days I have wanted to meet you. Now you are leaving. So I had to ask you to dance with me, if only once. Will you forgive me ? "

I felt flattered, though I did not believe a word of what she said. But it made me curious.

" Three days ? Where ? " I asked.

" Here. I came here on Friday for the first time with some friends. I noticed you. I liked your

strange aloofness. I wondered whether it was due to pain or was it just boredom ? It was not quite a studied indifference. It attracted me. Last evening I was dining with some other people, and I managed to get them to come here. You looked in very late with a friend. You left early because it was crowded and people bored you. I had a hunch I would find you here to-day, so I came—alone. I have never ventured to move about alone at this hour, but here I am. If they found out I would get into trouble."

She had relations in Paris. She had fled from Spain, only to be followed by the sad news that her brother had been killed in the war. It had made her sad and bitter.

I was very tired, but I told her I was going to have a bite across the road and a cup of coffee, and asked if she would care to join. Her face lighted at that. She went over to pay her bill, collected her things, fetched my hat and coat, slung her arm in mine and the next moment we were in the rue Fontaine heading for the Cloche d'Or.

It was a little too good to be true. I told her I had packing to do and that she must not keep me talking too late. She interested me and I was likely to forget the time in conversation. She stopped me in the middle of the road. " If I promise to do your packing for you, can I stay with you till you leave ? "

I was a little surprised. This woman was a problem. What did she really want? Were we speaking the same language? Who was she? In the dimly lit street, it was difficult to say.

" All right," I said and waited for her next move. She asked me if I really wanted breakfast and I said "No." She hailed a cab. I gave the address.... and when I switched on the light in my apartment, I could already hear the familiar voice of the concierge asking in the morning whether breakfast was for one or for two.

On the way home I had hinted that there was to be no financial aspect in this adventure. I had put it somewhat tactfully by saying that I had to get up early as I was short of cash and would have to borrow from a friend in order to square my bill. I thought that would disillusion her if she thought I was rich. But I felt small when she opened her bag and pulled out three thousand-franc notes and offered one to me.

The only way out then was to feel insulted at the suggestion that I would accept money from a woman! It was embarrassing for both of us, but I had brought it upon myself by being unduly cautious. Security! She lifted her glance from her bag, and as the street lamps shone on and off on her face, I could just decipher a faint smile on her face, and she said: "I am not trying to insult you. You said you were going to borrow from a friend,

weren't you? I am a friend of yours too."

There was nothing more I could say. I merely took out my wallet, which had quite a lot of money in it, and showed it to her. It was disarming the self. Nor did I regret it. I then gave up trying to fathom this little creature who had crossed my path. She was quite the most mysterious woman I have ever known—mysterious only because of my imagination, which was steeped in suspicion and which doubted even the most natural gestures.

Next morning as I awoke I was conscious of the presence of someone in the room. I was conscious of being shaken and the warm sheets were pulled away from me. I heard a voice saying it was late. I felt a cold sponge on my face—a crude awakening. Already she had put my things away, put buttons in a clean shirt, turned on my bath. Breakfast, too, had been ordered, while I was still asleep. There was only three-quarters of an hour to catch the 'bus at the rue Lafayette which was to take me to the aerodrome. I shaved hurriedly, dipped into my bath swallowed my coffee. The taxi was ordered and the porter had already put my suit-cases in. She waited for me to put a few last things into my attaché case. She looked out of the window, over the vast expanse of Paris roofs—les toits de Paris. I came over to say good-bye to her.

"Anything I can do for you, M——?" I asked.

She shook her head. I motioned to go. She held

me back by the sleeve of my coat. There was a short pause. Lack of words. She broke the silence : " What is your name ? " was all she asked.

When the taxi drove furiously to the office of the Air France in the rue Lafayette, I noticed the word "Securité' on the glass windows. I often wonder what that meant, and how much poorer I would have been had I clung on to that idea of safety which orthodoxy had dinned into me. If ever there was any doubt in my mind as to the course of my life that short week-end in Paris has decided once and for all that security is not for me, and it will require a great deal of disillusionment to induce me to forgo the thrill of an uncertain existence to settle down in life in the midst of security.

Already at Oxford, which changes the ideals of many young men, in my second year, I knew deep down in my heart that I would never get through the Civil Service. But it took a long time before I found the courage to confess this to anyone. Too long, in fact. Had I done it earlier, I would have spared myself and my parents a great deal of disappointment. I would certainly not have smudged my career with the first blot, which was so large that it spoilt an otherwise clean record. Now all that is left is just the blot. I write now not to excuse or acquit myself. It is of those who will come after me that I am thinking, for I know that mine is not an isolated case. The I.C.S. may be a

good thing, but it is not, and never should be, the be-all and end-all of every young man. For those who like the idea of the Civil Service and can live up to its ideals conscientiously, there is nothing better, but for the sake of the hundreds of others who come to England and have it thrust upon them as a sort of hall-mark of respectability, I say that it only ends as in my own case in a horrid failure, a bitter disillusion, and often both.

Along with the Civil Service come a whole crowd of respectable professions, and these include the Bar, Engineering, Medicine and others of the same kind. There is no peace on earth, nor any hope for those like me, who believe that their creative energies lie in another direction. Journalism is regarded as third rate. Writing books is only tolerably passable, but only if you write profound literature which is reviewed in *The Times* for those who cannot be bothered to read it. The authorities in India who are in charge of education know so little about what is going on in the world of modern literature that they cannot possibly think of giving the young anything more modern to read than Hardy and Shaw. There is very little sense or feeling for fiction, and the reading of novels is regarded as a form of inertia not to be encouraged.

The explanation of this attitude is to be found in the Indian's conception of work. By work is meant

something that has to do with the selling of cloth, or grain, or motor cars ; or something to do with banks or the stock exchange ; or some form of service whether it is as a clerk in an office on a pound a week or as a highly paid official of the Government. These attract the bulk of respectable people—our so-called gentry. If you belong to this classification of workers you are sought after by prospective mothers-in-law, varying, no doubt, with your income and your prospects. Then comes the somewhat dubious class known as the intellectuals, consisting chiefly of school-teachers and college professors. These are our pseudo-highbrows, who walk along the sea-shore in silent contemplation, composing poetry, or evolving schemes that will revolutionise the existing order of Society. As they pass by, orthodoxy looks upon them with a sneer, doubting their authenticity, pitying their lonesomeness, and regarding them as harmless members of Society. But those like me who aim at something different are the outcasts. We are looked upon as mere dreamers, who will never make any serious contribution to life—dreamers who have wasted our lives trying to achieve the impossible—dreamers who are destined to die disillusioned with not even a mortal soul to cry for us when we are dead. It is ironical that in this land of dream of which the Taj by moonlight is the symbol, we dreamers should be the outcasts.

V

LITTLE WHITE GODS

OFTEN IN THE UNDERGROUND, WHEN I AM WITH AN Indian friend, our roving eyes pitch simultaneously on the same face. Sometimes it is only that of a woman with bedroom eyes and we look at each other and laugh at the thought that has crossed both our minds. Sometimes we turn to each other and sigh, for it is the face of a man whom we recognise as the type that has spent most of his days in our country and is home on leave for a few months. There is nothing extraordinary about his face. He is a thoroughbred Englishman, refined, cultured and quite harmless. Only we know he has been to India. It is an intuitive feeling that is never wrong—like the sense of smell of a bloodhound trained to track down those who are guilty of crime.

There are little details about him that give him away. Sometimes it is the pattern of his shirting or the weight of his summer suiting or the cut of his trousers, or that curl in his lower lip, or that distant look in his eyes, or that slightly freckled complexion that is unmistakable about the Englishman in India. He may be reading a paper or looking round with a

smug self-complacency all his own. But one word will shake off his dreamy unconsciousness. You have only to say *"Sahib"* and his eyes will shine and his longing to be back where he is somebody will return. How he loves that word—*"Sahib"*. If only they would call him that in his own country. But he is a mere nobody here, brushing shoulders with workmen and even foreigners, and he hates being forced to that level.

Back in India he has a much superior status. The "natives" salaam him. He can have his own cook and his butler and even a chauffeur and a valet. All these he cannot afford in England. His wife, too, feels the difference. In England it would mean living in some suburb of London with an occasional visit to Town for the theatre or for a day's shopping in the company of those who, like her, have little to spend, then back home to cook a meal or to open tins of meat and fish and vegetables. How different it all is from the way she lives in India, where she had merely to lean back in her arm-chair and give orders, while half a dozen *"native"* servants bowed low and noted the *memsahib's* instructions. Then there was the club or the gymkhana, golf tennis and dancing and exclusively European surroundings. The absence of all these in England gives her an inferiority complex. Corresponding facilities would be far to expensive, and their friends and relations would ridicule the very thought of it.

I have always had a feeling that all the trouble in India is eventually to be traced to the presence in India of these essentially second-rate Englishmen who have pushed their way to the front row. What is bred in the bone comes out in the flesh ; and their coarse vulgarity—which is stifled in the precincts of the European gymkhana and the yacht club—finds an outlet in their association with the Indian People. To-day finer specimens are being shipped for Colonial and Indian consumption. You meet them on their maiden voyage, unassuming young men with no prejudices, who have an open mind on the Indian question. They go out to see Indian conditions first-hand and to draw their own conclusions. By Port Said they have already fallen into the hands of hardboiled old-timers, with their stories of " H. E." and the " C. in-C.". Soon they get into the same groove, they think like those before them; and when they go ashore at Port Said while the ship is coaling, they get a taste of that dirt and filth that is served up in cheap cafés and low-down brothels in the name of the people of the East. The young Englishmen see these dark, dirty people who have never in their lives spoken one word of truth, on whom you cannot rely and who would squeeze every penny out of you if only they were given a chance. Already on the quay at which the boat is berthed, these Port Saidians crawl up to you and offer their wares—" feelthee " post-cards and packets of

Spanish fly. All this creates in the young men a horror for the East.

At Simon Artz, that shop that has become famous all over the world, the young men queue up to buy their sola topees. They seem to say to each other: "Let's go native", and "Rule Britannia"! Then they come back to the ship and drink more beer, and stroll round the deck with their hands dug deep down in their pockets—out to solve great problems for us poor Indian people. In their stout hearts there is a feeling that they are going to India as missionaries from a civilised land to save us from the horrors of sickness, disease and mortality. So we, fellow-passengers on the same ship, sit back in our deck-chairs when the ship has left Port Said and watch our saviours walk round the promenade deck, discussing among themselves the great plans each has to solve, these problems for which we in India have not yet been able to find any satisfactory solution. Round and round they pace the deck, which is symbolic of their attitude, for they always seem to come back to the same point from which they started. So their minds are made up long before they set foot on India soil, and the "open" mind with which they intended to view the Indian situation is made up once and for all, and the British tradition continues.

Many years ago when my grandfather was in London he made the acquaintance of the late Lionel

Tennyson, the poet's son. A few years later Lionel Tennyson came out to India and I believe the family did everything they could to make his stay as pleasant as possible. They used to see quite a lot of each other and Lionel Tennyson asked my grandfather to dine with him at his club, which happened to be the Yacht Club of Bombay. Tennyson was unaware of the rules of his own club, which forbade members to entertain Indians on the premises of the Club, and when my grandfather told him that it would be impossible, Tennyson could not believe that there could exist an institution which refused admittance even as guests to those in whose land they were staying. I suppose the justification of this rule in the constitution of the Yacht Club is that the English conquered India by the sword, so they owe the Indians no apology. That is the attitude of the typical Englishman in India, but Lionel Tennyson was too well bred to accept that doctrine and it is not surprising that he preferred the company of a cultured Indian gentleman to that of the mediocrity that is eligible for membership at these exclusively English institutions. On his way back to England Lionel Tennyson died in the Red Sea, but not before he had written to his father, the poet, about the hospitality of his Indian friend.

Years passed and my grandfather was again in England. While in this country he went for a short trip to the Isle of Man, and a local journalist nosing

in the hotel register spotted the Indian name and mentioned it in the columns of his paper. This came to the notice of the Tennyson family, and one of its members arrived with an invitation from the poet. While my grandfather was there the poet showed his appreciation by reciting two of his poems, and two volumes of his work with a personal inscription are still with my family. That little episode occurred in the Victorian era. To-day we live in the neo-Georgian period, but the rules of the Yacht Club still remain the same.

Recently an effort was made by a section of advanced European opinion in India to alter the rules of these exclusively European clubs, but the majority opinion was definitely against throwing open the doors of Paradise—not even a back door. It is not the existence of such clubs tha. worries the Indians, but the importance that is attached to them by official circles. If only one Governor of a Province when he comes out to India would decline to become a member of those clubs, associations and gymkhanas which do not allow Indian on their premises, there is little doubt in my mind that ways and means would be found to change the constitution of these institutions. Nor would it be a bad idea for the British Government to include this provision in the instrument of instructions which is after all the skirt behind which so many high officials have taken shelter. When that day comes

we will be speaking of a different type of Englishman in India.

But meanwhile the bitterness grows. For all the assurance that law and order is being preserved in India, there is something in the hearts of the Indian people, over which Governments have no control, that makes them feel the pain and the anguish of this humiliation they suffer. Only fear keeps them from giving vent to their feelings and the thought of the suffering that has been inflicted on innocent people makes even the brave desist from breaking loose. The Indian is basically not a fighter. By nature he is a pacifist, and the creed of non-violence which Gandhi preached has struck root in Indian soil. So long as this remains, and the influence of the Mahatma counts for something, despatches will continue to arrive with assurances that the Empire of India is still the most priceless jewel in the Imperial crown, and that the Englishman in India is respected by the native subjects of the Crown.

Meanwhile, a great deal happens every day in India which never finds its way to the Press, or if it does, efforts are made to quash it effectively. The censorship that is exercised over the Indian papers makes the Press in India almost impotent to express the grievances of the people.

I remember an unfortunate incident that happened to an Indian lady whose husband was a high officer in the Army. She was travelling north,

somewhere near Quetta and Rawalpindi, to join her husband who had been stationed there. It was bitterly cold, for it was December, and she was travelling with her two children and an *ayah.* In the middle of the night she had to change from one train to another and there was an interval of a few minutes between the arrival and departure of the two trains. The junction at which this change of trains took place was an out-of-the-way place, where in the middle of the night there was no conveyance in the shape of a taxi or a carriage or even a tonga. To make things worse her own train had arrived a couple of minutes late, and in what short time she had she made a dash for the ladies' first-class compartment of which there was only one in the other train. At the entrance to this compartment there stood an Englishman, an Army officer, who was occupying it with his wife. He made no effort to move when he saw the Indian lady want to enter. On the contrary he said there was no room for anyone and that the compartment was full. The Indian lady remonstrated with him, for it was a ladies' compartment and he had no business to be there. But he laughed and said there was only half a minute more and she could argue the point with herself when the train was gone. No railway official was in sight, and in desperation the *ayah,* realizing the gravity of the situation, leapt to the man's throat. This sudden attack

which he had hardly expected from a female Indian servant shook him and he drew back. The two women took that opportunity to jump into the compartment. Once they were in, their position was stronger and they managed to get hold of the guard of the train. This timid official of the Indian Railways did not know what to do, for he was afraid of offending the Englishman and he could not very well ask the Indian ladies to leave the compartment—especially as it was a ladies' compartment. In the end the Englishman was persuaded to leave. Persuaded—mark you. But imagine what would have happened to them if they had not had the presence of mind to break through into the compartment—two Indian women with two little children stranded on an out-of-the-way railway station, where they knew no one and where there was no other alternative but to spend the night in the cold on the platform. That is the sort of gallantry which we do not expect from members of the British Army in India, whom we pay to maintain. This particular case had its complications, for this particular individual had been transferred to the same military station as the husband of the Indian lady, and of the two the Indian was the senior officer in the same service—both working ostensibly to keep law and order in the same part of the British Empire. Nothing happened about the incident, for it would have been a breach of etiquette to

report so trifling an incident; and I expect that after usual lapse of time they called on each other and forgot all about it, to the satisfaction of all parties concerned. Even the guard on the train must have felt happy that the Englishman took no offence at being politely asked to leave a ladies' compartment.

All this happened some years ago, when to incur the Englishman's displeasure was regarded somewhat as playing with fire. It might even have led to a para, in the London papers with the headline: "Attack on Englishman by mad Indian woman—Miraculous escape of Army officer and wife". But to-day there is more backbone in that same timid Indian people, and if a similar incident were to happen there would be no escape. For that crowd of Indian passengers in the same train, who are perpetually looking for opportunities such as these would give vent to their feelings and, taking the law into their own hands, would manhandle the offender so brutally that it would leave a permanent mark on his Anglo-Saxon complexion. That is briefly the difference between the India of yesterday and the India of to-day.

You cannot indict all the Englishmen in India and judge them by a few individual instances which do not reflect to their credit, keeping silent about the other numerous occasions on which they have behaved more humanely. But the gravity of these

offences increases in the light of the high degree of responsibility that rests on their shoulders as trustees of three hundred and fifty million dumb people. And mind you, we never created that trust obligation. It was done for us in the days of the John Company by our benefactors Clive and Warren Hastings, and the innumerable other lesser names which adorn the pages of our censored history.

In the past we have built memorials to commemorate the gallantry of those who gave their lives for a cause they thought was worth fighting for. The cities of India are littered with these memories. Memorials for gallantry! And as we stand before these—bareheaded—every Armistice Day, we ponder in the two-minutes' silence on the gallantry of these men who are now dead—dead, buried and, to be brutally frank, almost forgotten. We never think of those who are still living who were not so gallant. We never think of that soldier who on a cold December night barred the way to two poor Indian women, while we are expected to raise our hats and give up our seats to any English lady in the London Underground, and to raise our hats again if a lady is going up with us in the lift. Maybe it is in human nature to forgive. Maybe this etiquette business appeals to us so much more than it does to those who originated it.

But these incidents are soon forgotten—soon forgiven. To forgive is only human. We claim no divine inspiration for this very bourgeois quality, taught by all the orthodox religions; and we have enough religions in India which say the same thing in different languages, embellished with ceremonials to suit the requirements of the races for which they cater. Basically they are much the same and they all seem to encourage this "forgiving" idea.

When I hear of the gallantry of the English soldier, I think of some of our gallant men to whom we have built no memorials—martyrs who have faded away unaware even of their own heroism. So many years have passed since Indian troops were fighting in Mespot in a war which was begun in Europe. Many of these old soldiers are alive, though God alone knows where. English Army officers who took part in that same little skirmish are also alive. They can be traced through their regiments if they do not still belong to them. One such old-timer—an Indian orderly—was tramping the streets of one of the great cities of India, when he saw an officer in uniform come towards him. The Indian stopped, for the features of the Englishman seemed familiar. As he drew closer it all came back to him in a flash and he went towards the Englishman, who was like an old friend come back to life, and maybe he had, for they had fought in the same

trenches side by side, and no one knew who was alive and who was dead. As he accosted the Englishman, jubilantly exclaiming: " Sahib, sahib", the Englishman brushed him aside, and when he persisted in coming in the way, the Englishman pushed him aside with the remark: "Suver ka buccha" Rooted to the ground the old Indian orderly stood. He watched his old master pass, the same man for whom he had crawled on his belly to fetch water when they both lay wounded. "Suver ka buccha," he kept repeating to himself as he returned home a disillusioned old man ; and when his wife asked him that night why he would not eat his food he merely replied that he was not well and he was seeing and hearing things he could not believe. Next morning, when he took out his medals from his old steel trunk, he noticed how dirty they had become, and with fond affection he polished them again. The sahib must not have recognized him, he said to himself. In that belief he was prepared to lump the insult, even though he was a devout Mohammedan. This story is not registered anywhere, so we can safely say that it is the result of vicious propaganda against the British. But I remember hearing it many years ago and sometimes wonder if it is not true. I know it could be, and that thought alone is so depressing, for don't forget, this trustee obligation requires the trustee to be above suspicion.

"And yet." said the Englishman I once tried to convince on board ship, "remove the British Army from India and where would India be?" What with all the Mohammedans rushing at the throats of the Hindoos and the Hindoos retaliating by smashing bamboo sticks on Moslem heads and poor little innocent Parsees being knocked out in the bargain, not to speak of the danger to white women on their way to and from the gymkhana—yes, where would India be without the British? I did not venture to answer. I remembered that tea party in North Oxford and I thought it better to go back to my cabin, ring for the steward and ask him to fetch me a double brandy. Sometimes in an argument on India you are driven to drink to avoid unpleasantness. Pity it never struck him where England would be without India? Where he himself would be? Where his wife and children would be—and the hundreds of thousands who earn their bread on Indian soil? It is easier to serve in the Army in India than it is to drive cattle on a ranch in Canada. Out in India it is good close-range shooting, like practice in a back garden, and the bulls' eyes are recorded, with regret, in the casualty list, and read out by the Secretary of State for India with a break in his voice in a hushed House of Commons, Labour members protesting when in Opposition, and pleading for leniency when in office. And in Clapham next morning, when Mr. Smith

looks over his garden fence and says: "How d'you do?" to Mr. Jones on the other side, he sums up the whole Indian crisis in a nutshell, saying: "Them natives are at it again." So much they know about India. So much they care.

At the same time, out in India, Mr. Editor of the English Daily is busy licking stamps on to the envelopes which contain invitations to his wife's At Home, while some Anglo-Indian B.A., LL.B., of the University of Bombay, referred to in that newspaper office as the sub-editor, is trying to draft an editorial which begins, as editorials in India always do, with the ominous words: "The situation in India is fraught with much danger," and ending with a flourish and a fanfare of trumpets: "There is reason to believe that Martial Law will soon be declared to restore Law and Order."

Dressed uncomfortably in an ill-fitting dinner-jacket, the Englishman ponders at his dinner-table on the white man's burden. The clothes he wears give some idea of his approach to the problems of India. He cannot adapt himself to Indian conditions, and his insistence on tradition reveals a staleness of mind which makes him unsuited for the task that lies ahead of him. He will not change his ways, but wants India to turn to his way of thinking, even as in the great cities we have aped him in his way of living.

It reminds me of my first year in England when I received an invitation from a colleague of my father to lunch at one of the clubs in St. James's Square. It was full term at Oxford and I had specially run down to Town for the afternoon, having obtained my Dean's permission with considerable difficulty.

I had intended to change from my grey bags into a suit, but when it came to a choice between catching the train and a dark suit, I gave up the latter, and my pair of greys were quite respectable and being freshly cleaned had a nice crease running all the way down both sides of the trousers. The tweed jacket was also very respectable. I had made sure of that. In spite of it, my host was embarrassed by my appearance in slacks and was offended—so I heard later from my fond parent, who wrote me a long letter of several pages on the question of attire. But that was not all on which my host and I did not see eye to eye. Being a retired civilian he showed his strange longing for the land in which he had spent the best years of his life by ordering mutton-ball curry for himself and insisting that I should retain the Indian connection by doing the same. Not content with having thrust a bad imitation of a national dish on me, he insisted that I should use a spoon. My God, I thought, that was the limit. "The damned impertinence," I wanted to say, but I looked up,

and on the wall stood various gentlemen in period costumes, and I knew I couldn't say that in their presence. So I ate my curry and rice—with a spoon. It choked with every mouthful, for it was thrust on me, and I had no alternative but to eat. It was so much like what my countrymen have been doing in India all their lives. "Lump it," I said to myself, and did.

As I came out of that museum of old fossils, I felt a better man. The atmosphere inside had been stifling and I had felt small and insignificant, because I had been made to feel so. It was the presence of too many Englishmen from India all at once that brought back to my mind the utter helplessness of the people of my country. Yet it was quite pathetic to see these old men, clinging on in their dotage to memories of the past and whiling away their time writing on the club stationery to their old bearers in Poona. What an anti-climax after the pomp and majesty that was theirs in India.

Here in the great metropolis they were lost among greater men. Nobody would *salaam* them as they turned the corner into St. James's Street and on into Piccadilly. No one said "Sahib" any longer. Slowly into the tube station in Green Park they would disappear like worms that live in the bowels of the earth. No one knew where they would come out again. No one cared.

After lunch that day my host insisted on showing me the landmarks of London which happened to be in the vicinity. So we walked once round the Square and several buildings, all looking alike, were pointed out to me as being this and that club, with a gentle aside to say they were all very exclusive and only for the Upper Ten. We turned into Pall Mall and came to the bottom of the Duke of York's steps and then, at Admiralty Arch, he stopped and pointed to the column in Trafalgar Square. I looked vaguely at it and tried to appear impressed. It was very tall and a figure stood at the top. My host asked me who it was, and I laughed and said of course I knew that much about England.

The disbeliever, he asked me again: "But who is it?"

"Oh! Napoleon, of course," and his face fell and he shook his head and said:

"This is Nelson. Napoleon was a Frenchman. Why should we put him on a column in London?"

My general knowledge was poor, I confess, and my history had always been abominable, and I thought it fortunate I had got even as near in my guess as I did. But what difference did it make? What do I care whether it was Nelson or Napoleon or Drake or Bismarck? Personally, of the two, I still would rather have had Napoleon, for his career was more chequered, more glamorous. He

was much more a world figure than Nelson was. And why shouldn't you put him on a column in London ? That was what baffled me—this narrow isolationist viewpoint which savours of suburbia and mediocrity. Maybe that was how India, too, was governed—by mediocre Englishmen from the suburbs.

All that St. James's Square revealed and more. It showed me clearly how unsuited was that type of Englishman to negotiate a permanent peace treaty with the people of my country. It emphasised the fact that if India was to be ruled from outside, it would have to be ruled by the sword even as it is now, and that the only sanction to preserve the British connection was, after all, the British Army in India. Take that away and there would be no yacht clubs, no European gymkhanas. For there could be little mutual understanding between the type of Englaishman we find in India and us. We could never see eye to eye on the same question —never.

VI

LAMENT

HAVE YOU, AS AN ENGLISHMAN, EVER TRIED TO STOP an Indian in the streets of London and ask him what he thinks of the British rule in India ? Have you as a human being ever stopped an old woman who has lost her three sons in the massacre of 1914-1918, and asked her what she thinks of war ? She will stand there dazed, her face will become sad as she recollects the years—years of anxious waiting and the sorrows they brought to her. Speechless she will stand and the tears will roll down her wrinkled face and she will swallow the lump in her throat. Then she will pull herself together and pass on without saying a word. The Indian will do much the same, though less sentimentally, of course.

Let's have no ill-feeling about it—no more than is absolutely necessary. Sometimes we get unnecessarily provoked and, when carried away, let loose a whole flood of abuse. It is really not our fault.

One day in Madras I was preaching pacificism. A member of the Government higher in rank than a Secretary to Government promptly got up and asked what I thought India would do if England was at

war. He had put it more tactfully by making the English participation purely an act of defence. My point was that the pacifist argument still applied, no matter who was attacked or what the provocation.

The pacifist argument runs somewhat on these lines. If one man kills another it is murder ; if a Hindoo kills a Muslim, or a Muslim a Hindoo, you may call it a communal riot, but it is murder ; if an Englishman steps on the scene and kills the two of them, you may call it preservation of Law and Order, but it is murder just the same. And so if a Croat kills a Serb, a German kills a Frenchman, and an Arab kills a Jew--all at the same time, you can call it a Great War, but it still is plain murder. And it makes little difference if the Governments of these respective countries have given in their benediction. For there can be no degrees of pacifism, even as there can be no degrees of truth. So you are a pacifist hundred per cent or you are not.

From that absolute pacifist point of view, it does not matter what part of the Empire is attacked—even if it is gracious, kindly English. But the honourable gentleman had raised another issue. He was assuming that self-defence was an exception to the pacifist argument. He was assuming that if India was attacked Indians would defend themselves. Nehru himself had said that when he heard that his old mother had been the victim of a *lathi* charge and had received without murmur the

blows that had been inflicted on her head, he forgot all his non-violence, all his pacifism, all the *satyagrah* he had spent a lifetime to acquire. All the teachings of the great Mahatma, all the lessons on restraint were forgotten. The animal instinct in him took charge. He felt from within the urge to preserve that which was most dear to him—his now mother. In the same way would India fight for England ? That was the gist of the question that was asked of me. And the answer is that if we could feel for England in the hour of her need what Nehru must have felt for his mother there is little doubt that India would spring to action like one man. But shall we ? Can we ?

We have heard it expressed that India had everything to gain and very little to lose from the last war, and that compared to the death-roll, which embodied its sacrifice, it gained amply in material resources. Exports were up. There was practically no devaluation. Food was in abundance and ration tickets were unknown. But there is another viewpoint on this controversial question. For whatever we may have gained from the war, one single human sacrifice—or even so much as a dead dog—if it was Indian, was a supreme sacrifice on India's part. For we were fighting another man's war.

This much is certain—especially after the Statute

of Westminster—that England can never again give the call to arms from the supreme heights of Whitehall and expect the Colonies and the Dominions to fall in line. And if it cannot compel South Africa, Australia and Canada, it certainly cannot stage a command performance with Indian soldiers and Indian money and Indian lives. Those days are over.

You might ask why there is this conspicuous want of feeling on India's part. You might say we owe so much to England. Has it not given us the benefit of its civilisation and brought the joys of heaven nearer to the heathen's home? Yes, it may have done all this and more, but everything has been paid for. For every English pound the English brought with them they have taken back two others. We are well on the credit side and there is no need to balance the scales with ounces of sentiment.

We have been assured that were India to be attacked the whole of England would stand by her. Of course she would. We have never disputed that. But it would be with no humanitarian motive. If we are to attribute this humanitarian instinct to England, we want to know what happened to that instinct when China was hard-pressed by Japan, or when Abyssinia was fighting with its back to the wall. But India, that is different. It is the most priceless jewel in the Imperial Crown

and it would be foolish to suppose that England would let it pass into other hands. She could not afford to. Think of the crores of rupees that pay for the British Army in India, and for the hundreds of thousands of Englishmen who have found employment there. Think of those wives and children in England who would starve if the husband lost his job. Then if you like, call it humanitarian to defend India. But be honest about the motive.

We have no such interest in England. We are self-sufficient and self-supporting. We do not depend on England for our daily bread, meagre as it is. We have no sons and fathers for whom England provides. To us it is more the rich man's playground and the holiday resort, and the scene of historic conferences at the Table Round and we have paid for all these amusements. And if this is all that England means to us, what difference does it make whether in the future we dance in the Georgian ball-rooms of London, or the exotic *boîtes* of Paris, or the beer-gardens of Berlin. That is, I am afraid, our reaction to the British rule in India.

A certain political philosopher once told me that the Government of England differed from the Governments of the Continent in that the one was a Government "of law", the others Governments "of power". He went on to say how fortunate it was that England had passed the stage when one looked upon Government in terms of power—in

short, that the sanctions of the law were falling more and more into the background.

I asked him then whether he could explain and justify why a nation, which according to him had been nurtured and nourished on the best traditions of law, should follow an Imperialistic policy which was based so emphatically on power and where power alone was the only basis by which it could maintain law and order. He smiled and admitted that he could not justify it, but he said he could perhaps explain the psychology of such a nation by dividing it into "Englishmen" and "Englishmen-east-of-Suez."

The Government of India and a *fortiori* His Majesty's Government have tried to justify their Indian policy by saying that the preservation of Law and Order is essential for the maintenance of any government, whether it is an English bureaucracy or an Indian oligarchy or even a democracy. So that the Government of India still remains a Government based on "power". The struggle of the Indian people is therefore a struggle for power—power which is necessary for the establishment in India of what the Indians consider a government "of law".

When the late Edwin Montague made the famous pronouncement at the end of the Great War, he was speaking with the full authority of the Government of the day. The goal of the British

policy in India was dearly stated, and had the pace of self-government in India been accelerated to satisfy Indian demands, the people of India would have been content with less than they will be now. But the trouble about British policy has always been that whatever it has done, it has done too late ; the result has been that the patience of the other party is exhausted. So it was with Ireland, so it has been with India, and so it will always be. O Iago, Iago, the pity of it, Iago !

As I think now of the days when in almost every bourgeois Indian home there hung a dust-laden picture of Queen Victoria I get an idea of the contentment in those same families about the existing order of things. Our house on Malabar Hill was not far from Government House, and when there was a Garden Party or an At Home, the cars used to line up in double file all the way up to the gates of our house. As I went out for my afternoon's outing to the Hanging Gardens near by, I would envy all those people who were important enough to be asked to Government House, and in my heart there was a strange longing for all these far-off things. What a perfect picture of innocence that must have been—dressed up as I was in blue velvet shorts with glass buttons running up the sides, and in a blouse with an expensive lace collar.

Now I begin to realise how unreal that feeling was how unreal even the pleasure I derived from

these things. This disillusionment is the effect of the British rule even on those minds which like mine were impressed by all the pomp and ceremonial of that same British rule. One day, while still quite young, I felt the power and possibilities of Indian nationalism, when during the first non-co-operation campaign our chauffeur, who normally wore an English uniform, in which he was always uncomfortable, reported to work in a simple white *khaddi* shirt and a Gandhi cap. He was an old and faithful servant and had been with the family ever since I could remember and he took pride in the fact that in the service of our family he had got to know the cars and chauffeurs of every important Government official. Yet even he had found it safer to move about the streets of Bombay clad in a Gandhi cap, for the tide of popularity had turned from the Government to the rebel Gandhi, who was now no longer a rebel but a living symbol of Indian freedom. It was another illustration of the effect of the British rule.

I asked them then, naïvely, why he had changed over and gone into the other camp. I was only ten myself and conversation between us could not possibly have been very profound in the exposition of such a controversial political problem. But he replied with sincerity that the time was coming when the Indian would have a say in the government of his country and that the high officials would

be as dark skinned as he was—after all, India belonged to the Indians, didn't it ? These Englishmen, he added, were of no use to him. Here to-day and gone tomorrow—what did they care what would happen to him or his wife or his children ? He would one day have to fall back upon his own countrymen, so it was only fair that he should side with them now. One more Gandhi cap, he said, gave more moral support to the cause of Indian freedom. It was demoralising to the other side.

So that the effect of the British rule, alien as it was and administered by those who were, after all, birds of passage, was to bring over even the illiterate section of the great Indian public to the side of Gandhi and the Congress. And when these poor people saw this great movement grow, carrying with it some of the great men of India, who had wealth and power and greatness, they contemplated in their poverty the relative advantages and disadvantages of the British rule, and on the conclusions at which they arrived they shaped the future conduct of their lives. They recollected the little incidents of their uneventful existence and compared the treatment they had received at the hands of their own countrymen with that which they had received from their European masters, and they decided for themselves which they would serve in the future.

Lesser men began to emulate the example of the great. When it was announced that Pandit Motilal Nehru (the father of Jawaharlal), who was reputed to be fabulously rich and who, it was rumoured, sent his shirts to Paris to be laundered (though this has been authoritatively denied), had given his house " Anand Bhuvan " to the nationalist movement and had burnt all his European clothes in a bonfire, it created a great impression on the minds of those who were doubtful of the sincerity of Congress leaders. The proof of it was supplied by their sacrifice of the comforts of life.

The Government of India had made no such brilliant gesture. Instead they had only a year or two ago retaliated with the Jallianwalla Bag massacre, and the families of those who lost their lives in it were still smarting with the pain that had been inflicted on them. No doubt it gave them an idea of the power of the British Government, which was the idea underlying the ruthless massacre and the crawling order which followed, but it opened their eyes to the humiliation to which they would in the future be subjected if there happened to be any recurrence of a difference of opinion between the Government and Indian aspirations.

I can picture those people now, trapped in the four walls of that square, harmless people, unarmed. Women and children, too, gathered, not knowing what for, but inquisitively looking over the

shoulders of others as they always do in India. Then the arrival of General Dyer and the troops at the entrance—the fear that ran through these illiterate people—the firing—the dead bodies which only a moment ago were full of life—warm blood gushing from their carcasses—the proclamation of the crawling order—the humiliation of walking through the streets of their own town on all fours like beasts driven to the slaughter-house. All this may sound the usual sobstuff about down-trodden people, but when you see in England the horror expressed at the news of Italian airplanes bombing the native huts of the Abyssinians, and at Hitler's military tattoo at Almeria to avenge the alleged bombing of the German ship *Deutschland*, we wonder what has happened in these few intervening years to humanise public opinion in England.

We wonder whether this humanising influence has come to stay, and whether in their attitude towards India this change will be reflected. The effect of the British rule has been to disillusion us and we suspect the best of intentions. The result is a vicious circle of doubt, dismay, disobedience, martial law—followed by more promises, which lead to doubt and so on once more round the circle. I often wonder whether this will ever stop—this cruel waste of time and our energies which could be used to better purpose. But who is to make the first gesture, and if it is made, will the other side respond?

The methods employed to crush the morale of the Indian people—I use the words of the late General Dyer—have failed. The hunger of the soul for freedom and self-respect is more difficult to bear than the pain of the body, and those who have sacrificed the body have felt richer in soul. So that instead of crushing the spirit of the Indians, the sacrifices of the dead have been a stimulant to the living, and the *lathi* charges to preserve law and order and the prestige of Great Britain have only driven the moderates to the Left. Whitehall and Simla forget that the old method of punishing the disobedient boy is no longer used by the modern parent. It causes a bitterness in the child and sooner or later he finds an outlet to avenge himself. So, too, a stage comes in the history of every nation when patience reaches its breaking-point, and reason and cold logic give way to a fiery patriotism, more fervid in its sincerity, more determined in its execution. For India that stage came as a reaction against a foreign domination, and the struggle in India expressed itself in the form of riots and other manifestations of violence because of the opposition that the Indian encountered in that struggle.

Young men, carried away by their patriotism, transgressed even the laws of man which are held sacred in the moral code of every nation. They took human life as a symbolic protest against some legislation which they regarded as injurious to the

interests of their mother country. They sincerely believed that their action was justified in the eyes of God. They paid for their folly—in most cases with a rope round their necks, hanged from the gallows until they were dead. It was unfortunate for India, because this terrorism reflected little to its credit. It was a blow to the non-violence which the Mahatma had spent a lifetime teaching, and it met with sterner and more ruthless measures from the Government who found the justification they had been looking for. Whole areas of India paid for the actions of a few misguided, but no doubt sincere, patriots.

With what education they had acquired they were able to read of the struggles of other countries, and Russia, which had presented the last of the revolutions, appealed to them most. In the Soviet example they found something after their heart, and the triumph of the peasants against the oppression of the Czarist regime stimulated them to emulate the example. The short cut of Communism appealed to them more than the *satyagrah* of Gandhi, and the day-dreams of an India in which they would no longer be under-dogs were the opium of their otherwise drab and uneventful existence. Yes, opium that created fantastic illusions and premature deaths.

The answer to the terrorism in Bengal was a tightening up of the whole machinery of govern-

ment, and the preservation of law and order gave the Government a free hand to curb other manifestations of the nationalist movement. Arrests were made and the exodus followed, till there was no more room in the jails to house the political prisoners—and with it came martial law and *lathi* charges and open firing in the streets and bombing on the North-West Frontier. So the vicious circle went on, and so many innocent people suffered, being caught in that whirlwind which carried everything before it.

On this question of bombing I once asked Sir John Simon, then Foreign Secretary in His Majesty's Government, by what right, human or divine, he and his Government maintained that the life of one man in the East was less precious than that of one man in the West. It was on the occasion of the Presidential debate at the Union at Oxford, and Sir John was the guest of the evening and the principal speaker. He was defending the National Government, of which he was a member. I was naturally on the other side, for the whole idea of this sham unity had never appealed to me. As late as 1932, on November the 17th, the same Right Honourable Gentleman, or was it Mr. Baldwin, at the Bureau of the League of Nations, had said: "There is no aspect of international disarmament more vitally urgent than the adoption without delay of the most effective measures to preserve the civilian population from

the fearful horrors of bombardment from the air". And yet when Lord Londonderry, who had accompanied Sir John Simon, returned, he boasted in the House of Lords: "I had the utmost difficulty at that time, amid the public outcry, in preserving the use of the bombing aeroplane, even on the frontier of the Middle East and India".

Note the words "even on". Think how you would feel if you were "even on" the same North-West Frontier, and then perhaps you will understand our point of view.

But to go back to that debate at Oxford. At the end of a peroration on which I must confess I had worked for some days, I asked him this somewhat sentimental question of the value of human life. It was a dangerous approach, for the Oxford Union can react very indifferently to sentiment. I paused a little for breath, and quite unexpectedly from the other end of the great hall the cheering broke the silence. I could hear it travel towards me, growing intenser as it approached. I have never again experienced such a sensation. Perhaps it was because Simon was unpopular with the generation which was up at Oxford at that time. Maybe it was because I was an Indian, who had known what it meant to suffer such distinction. Whatever it was, the feeling that the House was on my side was the most gratifying thing that ever happened.

The Foreign Secretary was shrewd in his reply.

He expressed a sort of sympathy with what I had said, and followed it with innumerable ifs and buts, which left very little in common with what I had said. In fact, at the end of it, he had convinced himself that these two statements of different members of the Government were reconcilable, though how he did it God alone knows.

But the story does not end here. He was pleased with himself and had always had a soft corner for the Union of which he too was once the President—the scholar from Wadham at the same time as the late Lord Birkenhead. A few days passed and he was on his way back from Geneva at a time when Foreign Policy was on the front page of every English paper, and he was a guest at the dinner-table of Lady Astor. All eyes and ears were turned on him. He spoke, but at first not about Geneva! He was describing his triumph at the debate at the Union, and how he quashed the argument put forward by a young Indian. It is hardly necessary for me to say that I was not present at this distinguished gathering, but I was fortunate enough to hear about it from someone who was kind enough to tell me that I was mentioned at the dinner-table of no less a person than Lady Astor. Quite an achievement, I thought—and certainly worth as much as the Star of India! I must ask Sir John's forgiveness as well as that of the noble lady for mentioning what is after all

based purely on hearsay.

When I think now of how this clever advocate of the National Government turned all my best arguments against me, and made me feel at the end of it that I was the guilty party, I don't wonder that a whole Government filled with skilled parliamentarians can out-play at any conference a team of Indian amateurs, picked by the Viceroy and the Governors so that it does not offer too much resistance. It is a strange paradox that the Government should nominate the representatives of the people.

Sometimes we don't know where we stand. The British Government lays down a policy and gives us hopes. But when the time comes to implement the promise, they interpret it after much discussion and debate amongst themselves as to what they now want that declaration to mean, and we are back to where we started.

So have come the years of struggle, the constant sapping of the energies of a whole people—perpetual conflict. The politics of India are merely the history of that struggle, whether they took the form of open defiance to British rule, or terrorism in Bengal, or of Round Table Conferences, or White Papers and Constitutional Reforms. Indian politics exist only because of the Englishman in India. We are not sufficiently important in the world at large that our politics should affect any international situation, as

when Hitler marched his troops into the demilitarised Rhineland, or when Mussolini's planes swooped over Abyssinia. Our politics are elementary compared with that.

As I review the politics of my country I cannot help remembering that the British first came to India to trade. Later, they began to organise themselves to protect their trade. Next they began to protect us from ourselves. To-day we are just as much British as our conquerors. We have been taken into the fold—native subjects of a great Imperial power.

I was born British. My passport decides my national status as "British subject by birth". Issued in the name of the Viceroy and Governor-General of India, its purpose is to allow me to pass freely without let or hindrance, and to afford me every assistance and protection of which I may stand in need. Yet, strange as it may seem, one of the *visas* reads: "Bombay. Permitted to land." Strange irony—that I should merely be permitted to land in the land of my birth. Yet we thank God for small mercies.

British *subject* by birth! It is stamped upon us, even as it is on our passports. Only in our case the word "subject" seems to have a special significance—a sort of inferiority of status. That is our lament.

VII

MEN OF DESTINY

THE OLD ORDER CHANGES, YIELDING PLACE TO NEW, and the Indian National Movement fulfils itself in many ways. Two men of our times—contemporaries—both fighters for freedom—stand out far above the rank and file as leaders in the struggle for freedom. Historians may class them as contemporaries. Yet between them—between the short space of time which separates Gandhi from Nehru—there is a gulf which can never be bridged, for Nehru marks the beginning of a new era—without precedent, without a past, born unconventionally, without parents.

Transitions the world has seen more than once. Victorian England has evolved itself into a neo-Georgianism. The France of the Louis is now the France of the people. The Russia of the Czar is now the Soviet Republic, and the Germany of the Kaiser is the Deutschland Über Alles of Adolf Hitler.

Transitions—evolutions—revolutions you might call them. But one fact emerges out of all of them.

It is that this world has changed—for better or for worse. The counterpart of this in India would be the change from bureaucracy to self-government, from Imperialism to Swaraj, from despotism to democracy. It would be a change only in the methods of government. But the change in India from Gandhi to Nehru is a change of outlook as influenced by these two men who have dominated the thought of India by their own individual personality. The methods of government have remained much the same.

The picture of Gandhi at Oxford is still vivid in my mind—the picture of that restless gathering, breathlessly awaiting his presence, constantly turning to see if he had arrived. Time hung heavily on our hands, sharpened as our feelings were with curiosity, disturbed as were our emotions by something within us which we knew was noble and uplifting. And the moment arrived when in the doorway appeared this little figure, draped in white *khaddi*, walking beside the Master of Balliol, whose guest he was. With one spontaneous gesture that assembly rose—a mark of respect—almost unbelievable when you come to think that in this crowd was clustered all the blasé indifference, the indiscretion, the adolescence that was youth. Yet so it was, and even as I write the recollection of it brings back that same sensation, and I feel that cold chilliness passing through me now.

That was Gandhi. That was the saint, philosopher, and ascetic rolled up in one. That was the man who awoke the peoples of India from their sleep and led them to the seashore to make salt. That was the man whose popularity officials regarded with trepidation. That was the man whose life was based on one fundamental idea—*satyagrah.* It was as if Christ had come once again to preach the Sermon on the Mount. That idea of non-violence Gandhi preached in every gesture of his, and his weapon of conversion was his own persuasiveness. He did not go to the masses and say that Imperialism was a bad thing or that bureaucracy fast needed overhauling. They would never have understood all that. What he did was to form his opinion himself and then to use the masses to supply the force of his argument—the only argument that the Government ever listened to. It was not what he did that worried the high officials. It was rather what he could do. Every day it was becoming more and more obvious that the threads of caste, creed and religion were weaving themselves together into the one strong cord of Indian Nationalism—increasing in length and thickness, encircling the peninsula from Cape Comorin to Kinchinjanga, from the farthest point west to the last extremity in the East. On every inch of that mighty cord was written the name of Gandhi. In his *ashram* he would sit with his legs

crossed, always weaving, always planning the future of India.

Out of all this came the India of Mahatma Gandhi—the India of the non-co-operation movements, the first great struggle for the liberation of the Indian people. I have a vague recollection of what happened in that evenful year 1921, when riots broke out in every part of India and the Government were at their wits' end to find a solution to the Indian problem. Eventually, after several telegrams had been flashed to and fro, they decided to call out the Army. This method of suppressing riots is known as the use of the iron hand. It was expected that at any moment from the galaxy of British generals another Dyer would be unearthed to crush once and for all the morale of the Indian people. But India had changed so much since the Amritsar incident, that another humiliation like the crawling order would have ignited India into one blazing fire, which nothing could have quenched. With the Khilafat movement behind them, Gandhi was sure of himself. Every card that he held was a trump card, but true to his word he did not play them all at once. Instead, when, in February of the next year, he heard that a group of villagers had retaliated by setting fire to a police station and had burnt some policemen with it, Gandhi, to the amazement of everybody, gave orders to suspend the civil disobedience movement.

It was like throwing in a pat royal flush while the opponents were still raising the stakes. But that was Gandhi. That was how he had said he would play his hand and did.

Looking back upon that eventful decision now, there are many who believe that had he stuck on, he would have had his opportunity of dictating terms to the British Government, and the pages of Indian history would have read different from that year onwards. But Gandhi never regretted his decision. Maybe that is what has made him a world figure, in the same class as Lenin and Christ.

There is something very vague about him. Sometimes even his own followers fail to understand him. He talks in a language all his own. His actions are often inexplicable, unless you attribute them to a *force majeure*, or what the followers of Frank Buchman would call "guidance". But whereas Buchmanism is tittered at by Western intellectualism, Gandhi-ism suits that something mystic which is the East. It is like incense. Either you close your eyes and inhale the fragrance, or you open the windows and spit out the foul air that has contaminated your lungs. Probably it has something to do with the way in which houses are built for ventilation, or perhaps it is because these peculiar perfumes do not blend with London fogs and the black soot from the chimneys. Maybe it has something to do with the tastes of people. But it certainly affects

them differently.

Robert Bernays, who among his other achievements is responsible for that very readable book *Naked Fakir*, once told me that had Gandhi come to England as a sort of figure-head, leading a strong Congress deputation of experts on every phase of the Indian problem, he would have made a far greater impression than he did at the Round Table Conference. He had undertaken too much and consequently was tripped up on points of fact by those like Sapru and Jayakar who knew their brief and could quote chapter and verse. There was a great deal in Bernays' criticism, but to the mass of advanced Indian opinion it would be unthinkable to have had the Congress represented at that Conference by any other delegate than the one and only Mahatma Gandhi. I feel quite sure that if the Congress was again to be represented, their delegation would still number only one, and their nominee would still be the same.

"But why?" you may ask. Yes, why? Why does the sun shine? Why does the moon? Why a thousand things? Why Gandhi? One never knows.

The first time Gandhi fasted, some of us were sceptical about this new method of approach to politics. It was a sort of "shan't-play" attitude which had never paid in his world of tottering ideals. Nor was it quite public school! But the

days passed, and he achieved his purpose and India heaved a sigh of relief. It was uncanny. There was something frightening about the whole affair. Even the most cynical amongst us wondered for a moment whether God was on his side. We paused. We thought. It was difficult to believe that the Deity took any part in the politics of this world and we brushed that thought aside. But then was it only politics ? Or was it something that embraced all humanity ? Freedom of the soul ? Self-respect ? And then it came close to a message to this world brought to it by a new prophet. Often when I have seen my fellow-countrymen pay homage to him, I have looked into those eyes of his—eyes that seem to be looking a million years away, eyes that seem to penetrate into eternity, eyes that were now casually looking at us.

You have seen an atheist enter the temple of God. You have seen the scorn on his lips, the lack of belief, the complete absence of faith. You have seen that same man laugh at the sight of his fellow-men bending on their knees before the holy altar in a Christian church. Gradually that laughter has died down to a faint smile, and then even the smile fades away. Then the miracle is performed and he too kneels down along with the others, though he knows not the reason of his kneeling. And as he walks out of the church, his cap still in his hand, he wonders what happened in that short space of time

to kill the sceptic in him. He does not know. Only he who has the experience knows what it feels like. So I felt in the presence of Gandhi, though when he is far away, I find so much I can say by way of criticism about him. Even as I write I still wonder what he really is. Maybe those children he played with in the East End of London understand him better.

To-day as we look beyond the horizon another figure stalks across the grey skies. Sleek. Smart. Manly. Upright of carriage he walks on the troubled waters, without fear, without compassion, without apoloy. His name is Jawaharlal Nehru.

The son of a rich Allahabad lawyer and himself educated at Harrow and Cambridge, it can hardly be said that he came from the masses. Far from it. He was born and nurtured in the very best that money could buy. His enlistment for the cause of India was not from necessity, but of choice. His convictions, deep-rooted as they are, have been arrived at as much in his digs at Trinity as in his father's palatial home. His outlook on life is essentially Western. The East supplies merely the colour—the emotional background of his life. He is a highbrow, a thinker, a follower of Lenin and Marx, a modern, fired with that intensity of purpose which knows no bounds and within him is a bitterness which runs through the blood.

From the point of view of the masses he is the man

from outside—a man who leads them to battle, always ahead of them, never abreast of his followers, ahead of his times, always marching, marching to his own pulsating syncopation. He refuses to recognise any regime which conflicts with his conception of the ideal Socialist State. If power were in his hands he would use all the methods of the Kremlin and the Wilhelmstrasse. He believes in himself even as dictators do. He does little things which bring him nearer to Hitler and Mussolini. He takes a salute in his own dictatorial fashion—only their shirts he has not yet adopted. He is a firebrand, creating in those with whom he comes into contact a restless atmosphere. He is a soldier who feels lost in times of peace. Like Napoleon he is always wanting to lead whole armies. To the young he is a sort of mental aphrodisiac, maddening as it works. It is so different from the balm of Gilead and Gandhi.

With his own thoughts he cloisters himself, wondering what the morrow will bring, struggling even with himself as one does in prison walls, struggling to break down the barriers, the chains that have encrusted his freedom. On the battle-field, fighting he will die. He would be happy with no other death. It is typical of the man. Heine once said, and Nehru seems to say so now: "Lay on my coffin a sword, for I was a soldier in the war far the liberation of humanity". There is something

grandiose about everything he says and does. His tale should only be told, like Tamburlaine's, in Marlowe's mighty line.

One day when I was in London, I heard that Nehru was on his way to Europe and would soon be in Town. I waited for him to arrive. He was living in a block of modern apartments in the West End and I picked up my telephone and dialled his number. When I was put through to his apartment, I asked for him, giving my name in a casual sort of manner, making it sound important. He came to the 'phone. I said quite frankly that I had nothing important to discuss, but that if he had a few moments to spare I would like to pay my respects to him. It was an approach which appealed to him —the frankness of it, supplemented by respect which was due to him. He gave me an appointment and I arrived punctually. I hung round in the corridor, while someone else was in conference and later I was called in. The time of the day was not conducive to any brilliant dialogue between us, for it was nine in the morning, and I had unwillingly pushed my head under a cold shower to look clean and respectable. But he was more alive, and the breakfast table showed that he was well prepared for the hard day's work that lay before him.

He wore a dark-brown suit of heavy woollen material. It was well cut though I feel sure the

material was a home-spun from India. But he was disappointingly short—a smallish man quite different from the towering personality I had expected. The pictures had always shown him on a raised platform and perhaps that had left an impression that he was tall and stood out far above other men.

I suggested an article about himself with his permission, but he disliked the idea entirely. So I turned the conversation from him to myself—a conversation different from those to which he had been accustomed. I did not ask him for a solution on the Indian problem, or what he thought of Untouchability. I knew I would be flung out sooner than I would have liked, and I wanted some excuse to fathom the man at close range.

He was cultured, well-read—a perfect specimen of the educated Indian. He held strong opinions on every phase of human life and expressed them with the force of authority. Self-assurance he had in abundance, though he only stood five-feet odd. He could convince not only himself, but had the power of convincing others. He was shrewd, cold and calculating. He thought in terms of facts and figures and argued like a first-class advocate. He was polished in his manners, and effective in his utterances. Intellectually he was at times quite brilliant and impressive. But he had one complex. He gave the impression that he liked to impose his

views on minds that were inferior to his, so that they could not answer or retaliate. That was Nehru at his best, but bring in the element of doubt, or ask a question that was not rhetorical and he would become unduly aggressive. This was only my impression, though a subsequent meeting in India seemed to corroborate this first impression.

It was in Madras when I was asked to be present at a small informal gathering to meet Nehru and to help to ask such questions as would draw some good answers from him. But not a chance. The whole of the three-quarters of an hour was monopolised by an Indian Liberal, who persisted in asking him questions which have been asked in India since the Lord knows when and to which the answers are always the same. Nehru replied and and scored every time. He knew he was scoring on that target and he seemed to enjoy an easy morning's work and stuck to his Liberal heckler. Often at the end of an answer, he would turn round to various people, who had by then lost the trend of the argument and feel pleased with himself and everyone would nod assent much to the annoyance of the solitary member of the Indian Liberal Party, who felt sure that at least right was on his side, even though might was overwhelmingly on the other.

It was interesting to see the various faces that were concentrating on this one central figure.

Except for myself and one or two others the whole crowd was in a sort of semi-undress which is regarded as a national costume in the South of India. There is nothing the matter with wearing Indian clothes in India. That is how it should be, and I should have done it myself if I had been there long enough to get myself a few of my national clothes, but it was the thought that so many of these people had merely jumped into them for the occasion that gave me an insight into the fickleness of Indian character. Did it matter what clothes they came in to meet Nehru? Was it a compliment to him that they had changed for his sake? Or was it that they were time-servers prepared to serve under any regime that paid for their services? It made me disillusioned about the India of to-morrow.

Nehru too was not another Gandhi. Sad thought that, when I come to think there will be no one to take the Mahatma's place when he is gone, and that Nehru is the best we have. You cannot expect a politician with dictatorial leanings to step into the shoes of a humble, unassuming little man who had by his simplicity won the hearts of a whole people, whatever their caste, whatever their creed or their religion.

I have often asked myself—after Gandhi, what then? If he is gone what will become of those millions to whom he is a sort of messiah, bringing

new hope to make the burden of their lives easier to bear. His word they will respect even as they did in 1921, when he recalled the non-co-operation movement, but would they have obeyed anyone else ? Would they follow Nehru as meekly.

I am afraid not. Nehru speaks to them in terms of economic freedom, of revolt, of a higher standard of living and all these far-off things which they don't understand. Nehru has not the art of expressing himself by symbols.

He is no believer in the ceremonial of religion, and so long as India is what it is, it needs something tangible to cling to, something it can feel and touch and regard as holy. All this will have no place in a Nehruian India, and the millions who have had this all their lives are unwilling to give it up for something they do not even understand. Nehru realises that himself. In his autobiography he gives you an insight into himself when he describes his reactions in May of 1923 when Gandhi began his twenty-one days' fast. It was on the issue of untouchability, for the Harijan movement had been his life work, and no sacrifice, however great, was too much for such a cause. To Nehru, however, the fast was an incomprehensible thing and he says : "....if I had been asked before the decision had been taken I would certainly have spoken strongly against it". Yet Gandhi's letter to him moved him, and he replied : "....What can I say about matters I do

not understand? I feel lost in strange country where you are the only familiar landmark and I try to grope my way in the dark but stumble. Whatever happens my love and thoughts will be with you."

It was typical of Nehru. It shows the conflict within him between his own convictions on the one hand and his respect for the Mahatma on the other. In the end the latter prevails and later he wires to the Mahatma again: "....I feel more clearly now that whatever happens you win".

If I may quote from his chapter on religion without committing too much larceny, it will explain better what I want to say about the essential difference between Gandhi, the man, and Nehru the politician.

He says:

".... I watched the emotional upheaval of the country during the fast, and wondered more and more if this was the right method in politics. It seemed to me sheer revivalism, and clear thinking had not a ghost of a chance against it. All India, or most of it, stared reverently at the Mahatma and expected him to perform miracle after miracle and put an end to untouchability and get Swaraj and so on—and did precious little itself! And Gandhiji did not encourage others to think; his insistence was only on purity and sacrifice. I felt I was drifting further and further away from him

mentally, in spite of my strong emotional attachment to him. Often enough he was guided in his political activities by an unerring instinct. He had the flair for action, but was the way of faith the right way to train a nation? It might pay for a short while, but in the long run?

"And I could not understand how he could accept, as he seemed to, the present social order, which was based on violence and conflict. Within me almost conflict raged, and I was torn between rival loyalties. I knew that there was trouble ahead for me, when the enforced protection of gaol was removed. I felt lonely and homeless, and India, to whom I had given my love and for whom I had laboured, seemed a strange and bewildering land to me. Was it my fault that I could not enter into the spirit and the ways of thinking of my countrymen? Even with my closest associates I felt that an invisible barrier came between us, and, unhappy at being unable to overcome it, I shrank back into my shell. The old world seemed to envelop them, the old world of past ideologies, hopes and desires. The new world was yet far distant."

That was the vision that was always before Nehru's mind—the vision of a new world far distant but yet within grasp. Socialism within our lifetime brought about by whatever method was practicable. He could see it before his very eyes—a

world in which there would be the complete nationalisation, or shall we say " internationalisation ", of the means of production, distribution and exchange. Untouchability was a minor detail and life was too short to pause for the small problems of a handful of the oppressed. India must fight greater battles—the peasants of Bardoli had a greater mission in life than merely to squat for excess of rent. Whole armies marched before his mind's eye—first the three hundred and fifty odd millions of India, then China, perhaps, and so on marching up and down the face of this earth to the strains of " Land of Hope and Glory ". Or would it be to the strains of the " Internationale " ? Who knows what is really at the back of Nehru's mind ?

When I compare all this with one sentence the Mahatma spoke, I realise that there is something in this little man that eclipses all the Nehrus and the lesser politicians put together. Gandhi said : "Even God does not come to the poor except in the shape of bread." It contained to my mind all the economic doctrines in a nut-shell. It was so simple that even the most illiterate amongst us could understand what he meant. In it was all the socialism you want in a lifetime, or in a generation. Its crisp phraseology was worthy of Chekov, its profundity was worthy even of Christ.

But that will not be the India of to-morrow, the India when Gandhi has gone. Then we shall have

passed from that peace that passeth all understanding to that perpetual strife which will be Nehru. Some of us will feel out of place in this Nehruian India. Some others will find in it the true expression of our pent-up emotions, and the counterpart of our great ideals, for we are moving from Gandhi to Nehru.

VIII

REVOLT

SO BEGINS FOR US THE AGE OF REVOLT, OF WHICH the Indian National Movement was perhaps the greatest landmark. But it was not the same movement that Tilak had brought to life, nor the one which Gandhi had nursed. It was something that had arisen anew, not a re-kindling of the fire from dying embers, but a flame of new life that arose like the Phœnix from its ashes. The living symbol of this movement was Jawaharlal Nehru. His is the spirit that cannot be crushed, nor does he seek that peace which Gandhi had found. Nehru wants no ploughing of the soil. His spirit frets with discontent and he leads the aimless march of tortured souls. It is humanity uprooted—the revolt of the flesh, the revolt of the mind, the revolt of youth. Revolt !

Once in his presidential address to the Congress he had expressed himself, when he said that it was his one objective to create an atmosphere of revolt. English-owned newspapers had fallen upon that word and turned it to mean an open acceptance of the Soviet doctrine, an acknowledgment of the

methods of violence, a hint of a plot to bring about a revolution, an implied threat to upset the Government set up by law, open sedition, an invitation to the Communists, the beginning of a Red Terror. All this our great editorial writers found in that one expression of Nehru. But was that all that Nehru wanted ? Somehow I felt he wanted to go further—past the Soviets, past the Communists, past the revolutions of Europe. He wanted a revolution from within the soul of his fellow-men, something that would awaken them from that lethargy which years of foreign domination had brought with it. We had become too irresponsible, relying always upon our British trustees to look after the trust estate. We had shirked every sort of responsibility on the grounds that England would not let the precious jewel slip out of the Imperial Crown. We forgot, however, that the goldsmiths were at every stage fastening the jewel firmer into the Crown, adding now and then an additional clasp to grip tighter, till it became quite secure. But with this added security it lost some of its lustre.

But that was only one aspect of the revolt. The British tradition was not the only target at which he aimed. There was orthodoxy, there was religion, there was the whole economic condition of the masses which he wanted to uproot. All that must go, and in the minds of the young this revolution must be brought about—a revolution first of

thought which would not stop at anything, not even at action. It was a revolution that knew no bounds but achievement. It was not a mere five-year plan. It covered a larger span of years—indefinite, unlimited, and Nehru merely wanted to mark the beginning. It was like Christ dating with his birth the Christian Calendar, though this civilisation B.C. shows that the year of the Lord had little to do with the origin of the world or the descent of man. So with Nehru was to begin the first year of our political, social and economic calendar, and the regime of Gandhi would date backwards from that.

I first become aware of that power of revolt when I was at the law college in Sind, marking time for my admission to Oxford. I had just graduated from the University of Bombay to which these Sind Colleges were affiliated. I had been roped into an elocution competition in one of those years and came back with a little silver medal which represented the third prize. Encouraged by a successful first appearance, I tried again and moved up one place and brought back a little cup. The third year, I had a fairly good chance of scraping through to get the Besant Cup, which I coveted more than anything else at that time.

The debate was a straight issue between Dominion Status and Independence. Unaware of the significance of either and being the son of a Government

official, I decided in favour of Dominion Status, as I felt quite sure that on the other issue I would get little help from my father or any other member of the family, who were far too loyal even to debate on such a revolutionary side. Besides, the judges who were to decide the winner included two High Court Judges and the Principal of a College, subsidisedby the Government, and they would feel less embarrassed to decide in favour of a Dominion Status enthusiast than they would for the other. As it turned out, I was right in my judgment of the judges. When my turn came, I talked about honour and glory and a whole lot of boloney about our connection with the Empire, on the strength of which I got a very high marking from the judges.

A young Independentist followed me. A few sparks flew—and later there was a fire. He made references to the dropping of bombs on the North-West Frontier, and the chairman, an Indian High Court Judge, pulled him up, saying that he as a Government official could not tolerate such allegations to be made in his presence and that the speaker must refrain from causing him more embarrassment. I have always had a great deal of respect for the judge in question, and of his abilities as a member of the Bench and the Bar, but even though it was all in my favour, I could not help feeling that he had by his intervention in the debate deprived the speaker on the other

side of his main argument. The House was all for the speaker. Judge or no judge, they shouted him down, till the whole debate broke up and the cup was not awarded that year. Yet I felt within myself a strange joy at seeing my generation make its voice heard in what had been the exclusive province of the elder statesmen, and at that spirit of revolt which emanated from the young man in the face of the orthodoxy that sat on the raised dais. It was a sight for sore eyes—the sight of youth struggling to assert itself.

Later, at Oxford, another more delicate question arose. At the annual dinner of the Majlis, there was a strong feeling against drinking the King's Toast. Personally, I had no great feeling on the subject and was inclined to vote against so conspicuous a breach of custom. But others felt strongly on the matter and what they felt came straight from the heart. There was an overwhelming majority against the inclusion of the customary toast and there was no option for the society but to acquiesce in the wishes of the majority of its members.

There were, however, other complications. The guest of honour at that dinner happened to be the ex-Viceroy of India, then Lord Irwin, who had only just relinquished his high office of State. As Viceroy he was the representative of the King and the situation became somewhat complicated. When he got up to speak that evening, he referred

to the absence of that toast and to the fact that his presence there was as an ex-representative of His Majesty and in that capacity he felt that the absence of the toast was a great insult. I remember the President looking very grave as he sat next to the guest of honour. He happened to be one of those young men who knew little about politics and the presidency had been thrust upon him because he was politically too unimportant to be objected to by any of the factions in the Oxford Majlis. But the power behind us all was Humayun Kabir—one of the greatest products of modern Oxford, marred though his success was by his misfortune to miss the Presidency of the Union by the narrow margin of four votes. I have always felt that he was more deserving of that office than a great many of us who succeeded, but his intonation, his essentially Indian accent went against him, and the ordinary members of the Union Society did not go any deeper than the surface.

I remember Kabir that night at the Majlis dinner. Seldom have I seen anyone speak with such sincerity. Others before him had made lame excuses to explain away the absence of the King's Toast. But Kabir came straight to the point. It was a pity, he said, that Lord Irwin also happened to be an ex-Viceroy of India. The coincidence was unfortunate, for the toast, he said, was left out after cold-blooded deliberation, and he for one was

prepared to stand by his decision and to defend it on those grounds which had influenced his decision.

It was the soul of India that was pouring out of the mouth of Humayun Kabir—the soul of the new India ,my India, his India,the India of those like us, who are young and unafraid. Revolt was the one word which embraced us all. Revolt !

But this new spirit of revolt was not to be found only among the more cultured Indians. I was taking my place in the queue, at a local telegraph office in Madras, even though it was regarded as the privilege of those who wore English clothes to claim precedence over those who wore a shirt and a *dhoti*. Strange custom that but now fast disappearing in India. There were others behind me, among them an obnoxious young man, who had merely skimmed on the surface of education, and I noticed he made several efforts to get to the counter before me. I signed to him that I had come first, but he paid little attention. He pushed his way rather roughly, when I caught hold of him by the collar and dragged him back. He was offended. With a sneer on his face, he turned to me and said: "If you dress like a gentleman, why don't you behave like one ? " I thought there was little else for me to say in reply. He had taken refuge in the one way which I had left open. I realised I had to pay for being clad like a European, even though there was little else about me to suggest that I came from the West. I granted

him the right of way, though I wonder whether he ever understood why. It was a source of some satisfaction to me to see this skinny little fellow ready for a scrap, even though he was only half my size. There was something within him that supplied that in which his physique was deficient. It was the new spirit of the young India, and how could I ever have the heart to break that.

But it is a dangerous influence, for it might one day get quite out of control, and we would find that we have shaken off the shackles only to be bound by a new chain. But these are risks that we are bound to take if we hope to attain the freedom to which we aspire.

When I heard that hordes of young men were marching in the streets of India as protest against, some action of the Government or other, and shouting the words "Inquilla Zendabad ", I interpreted it not so much as the result of Soviet influence, but as the expression of fearless youth, misguided no doubt, but fearless just the same. The revolution they were shouting to bring about was a revolution to sweep away religion, orthodoxy capitalism, the *status quo,* time-worn institutions and a great many other things which had contrived to make poverty a privilege of the masses. How they were going to bring this about they did not know, but they shouted for it all the same. That was a fact that was not to be passed over too lightly

—the fact that they shouted. With the echo of their voice, men like Nehru could force the Government to come to terms, but in a quite and peaceful India he would not even be heard by any of the heads of Government.

Some people will not argee with me when I say that street demonstrations have done India a lot of good. Sir Samuel Hoare, as Secretary of State for India, once made the somewhat brutal comment on that section of Indian political opinion which was critical of his White Paper. "Let dogs bark," he said, "but the caravan goes on." Apart from the fact that I feel that a Minister of the Crown should choose his words with greater care, this "dog" reference can be carried further, for dogs sometimes bite, and this can become quite dangerous, specially if the dog is mad. Then we call it hydrophobia or national fanaticism, and some believe that you have to shoot the dog to save the man who has been bitten. Others would like to see the man shot to save the dog. It all depends upon the treatment you want to give, and to what school of medicine or politics you belong. But how should Sir Samuel Hoare know, skating as he does, on ice, every morning at Bayswater? Some day he too will realise the meaning of the under-dog's bark. Someday—perhaps.

But the revolt had spread to other spheres. The authority of the paterfamilias had been consider-

ably undermined by the ungrateful son. The young man has established his claim to make his own decision on those questions which affected his career, his life, his wife. The parent was consulted more out of courtesy than of right. Where the elder generation put up a resistance, the younger grew stubborn and obstinate. Where they acquiesced it gave rise to a bond between father and son, a bond which was of some lasting value.

The respect which an Indian son feels for his father is proverbial, but in the past the parent has been known to take too much advantage of it and to assert his authority over his son in too autocratic a fashion. I have no cause to complain. On the contrary, I have sometimes felt that perhaps I might have overstepped the mark in my enthusiasm to assert my individuality in view of the sacrifices that my father made to make Oxford possible, and later to turn a sympathetic ear to my point of view. I have seen him feel hurt, yet not express his feelings, bearing no malice nor any grudge towards me for wanting to go the way of my choice, when all friends and relatives had sneered at him for his foolishness in giving in.

"The boy is getting too big for his boots," one friend wrote to him—a remark which hurt him more considering the source from which it came. But that was not the worst he had heard of me, yet his faith in me has not been shattered, for he knew that

youth of the world was moving that way and he could not deny his own son the right which the younger generation claimed and asserted all over the world. The revolt of youth was not confined to members of the Indian Nationalist Movement. Its boundaries were not defined. It was to be found in the young men at Oxford who voted for that Pacifist resolution at Oxford and in the countless Universities that followed suit, in the Houses of Parliament where father and son sat on opposite sides of the House as Baldwin the Premier and his son Oliver did, in the Royal House of Windsor where Edward the VIII did not follow in the footsteps of his father and chose to discard some of the ceremonial of the English Court, and in every middle class home in the world where the son had followed his own calling and relied upon his own judgement rather than have his life and career planned out beforehand like a chart which he had merely to follow. The life stories of all these young men could make some contribution to an anthology on Revolt. Only in our case it was the suddenness of it that made it a little more conspicuous than in the case of those in other parts of the world. We were revolting against too many things all at once.

A few years ago a young Parsee lad, still in his teens, created a sensation by completing a solo flight from India to England and incidentally won one of the most coveted trophies in the world of

aviation. I remember him vaguely, a fresher at that same college at Karachi, where he was then comparatively unknown. That would never have happened in the India of our fathers, the India of only a few years ago. Then it was security and self-complacency, a sane, sober mid-Victorian attitude to life, and an almost Roman relationship between father and son. No flights across the boundless horizon and the grey skies, no conquests in far-off lands, no visions realised, no dreams come true, no revolt. But the younger generation of to-day wants to go places and do things, and does not hesitate to overcome those obstacles that come in the way of his life whether it is an old-fashioned custom or a fond parent. Sometimes I feel that I don't know where we really want to go, or what we are aiming at. Is it truth? Beauty? Is it to write books that will sell in every bookshop of the world? To fly planes round and round this little planet, stopping not even for gas? Is it to build Empire State Buildings and Taj Mahals? Is it to obtain self-government and Indepedence? I don't know. Perhaps it goes beyond all that—beyond truth and beauty, beyond fame and freedom. What is there beyond? I don't know, but their journey to some unknown destination has begun. A cargo of dynamite has begun its dark journey across the face of India. No one knows where it is due to land or why. We only hope it will not blow up too

soon....midst the sight of midnight trains in an empty station....midst foolish things! It would give our enemies too much to gloat about.

I cannot when speaking of revolt refrain from commenting upon the Congress which inspired it. A few years ago when you spoke to the average Englishman in India about the power of the Congress his only comment was "Damned nonsense". Damned it was, but a triumphant damnation. Damned by the Government! Damned by orthodoxy! Damned by capitalism, by communalism!—it topped the poll by an overwhelming majority. The British Government decided upon the right way to ascertain the will of the people, and the people returned their verdict. But you have grudged them even their victory. Malcolm Muggeridge, the star turn of the *Evening Standard* on Indian affairs, poured scorn on these elections where the voters were so illiterate that they cast their vote by marking crosses against symbols.

Has it not been said of the Englishman that he does not know when he is beaten? Was it a coincidence that all over the country the people showed such a marked preference for the symbol of the Congress Party? Could not the Government of India or the Conservative Party or even Mr. Muggeridge help the other candidates who stood for election to choose more attractive symbols? If only Lord Beaverbrook read some of the stuff that

is written in his papers about India, he might sometimes feel like getting an Indian to write about India. Or is that asking too much from a press lord, who has the welfare of the Empire so much at heart?

Elections all over the world are based on symbols. You remember the old symbols. First, there was "King and Country", and the "Union Jack", and "Hang the Kaiser". Then came "The land fit for heroes to live in". And not so long ago there was "Country before Party", on the strength of which an essentially Conservative Government came into power. These were just as much symbols as were the elephants and monkeys that were used in India. The only difference was that the verdict of the English people was influenced by these patriotic symbols, whereas an elephant or a cow or a cat or a dog can hardly be accused of arousing national sentiment.

Very few of us are acquainted with the origin of the Congress. From comparative obscurity it blazed across the front page, so that to us who saw it rise to power, it seemed as if it had sprung up without any origin, without any previous record. Nor is it necessary that we should be familiar with the early history of this movement, for only in 1921 when the non-co-operation movement was lunched by Gandhi did my generation become aware of the

power and the possibilities of this party of the future.

It is of little consequence, though of some academic interest, that an Englishman by the name of Hume first started the idea, which in its mild form was to get for Indians some representation in their own country. This was towards the end of the last century. But the new century brought events of greater importance. There was the Partition of Bengal, and later came Tilak and *Swadeshi* and boycott. The eventful years were 1905 onwards. Then the Great War began in Europe and Congress gave its support to it, because Gandhi believed that it was a war for democracy. With 1917 came the Montague Declaration—the generous gesture of the British Government—1919, when war was over, brought to us the first fruits of our labour and the reward of our sacrifice—General Dyer—Jallianwalla Baug—the crawling order. Then came the Civil Disobedience Movement launched by the Congress —the greatest non-violent mass movement the world has ever seen. And so began the Congress of to-day. Sixteen or seventeen years have passed since then, during which the Congress has been tested. And in 1937 the first Congress ministries took office.

When I think that only a few years ago poor clerks in Government service dared not wear a Gandhi cap for fear of being dismissed from Government service, and to-day when an English

I.C.S. Secretary to Government is known to wear a *khaddi* suit as a mark of respect for those who constituted the Ministry, it almost seems as if a revolution had taken place in our country, changing not only the attitude of Indians, but of the Englishmen-in-India as well. It is a wonderful feeling to be a contemporary of such a revolution, to see the struggle of a whole people, the failures, their triumphs. Then their sorrows become your sorrows, their joys yours too, and the greater is your rejoicing if you have made the slightest contribution to it. How I wish my upbringing had been different, and that my environment had not always savoured of red tape.

Yet sometimes I have felt that even the Congress has failed to give the necessary guidance to the people and has expected too much sacrifice from those who can barely keep body and soul together. For the history of the Indian struggle, though written under the chapter heads of great Congress leaders, has to be told in terms of the sacrifices of ordinary people. Tilak! Gandhi! Nehru! These were the headlines. But it was the people that filled the pages of the story of the struggle—working-class people, peasants as well as industrial workers, the peasants of Bardoli, the mill-hands of Bombay and Ahmadabad. As in Russia and in Socialist England they have supplied the force of the argument. Their bodies have borne the brunt of the attack—the

baton charges and the bullets fired in the name of law and order. To expect these people to make more sacrifices to establish a Congress principle, and to urge them to strike, when they have obviously no means of sustenance, may be good politics, but I would rather see the principle sacrificed even though it may give the Government a victory than that the sacrifices of the masses should pile at the altar of Independence in order to enable the Congress leaders to play soldiers with the representatives of the Government. Yet perhaps it is only because I lack the courage to make the sacrifice myself that I venture to criticise the Congress. For when one has, as the Congress has, made the Independence of India the only mission of its life, it is difficult to know where to draw the line. But do all these millions and millions of people who form the masses of India want to make Independence the sole reason of their existence? Don't they sometimes want to lean back against their cow-dung huts and say "Hell" to it all whether it is freedom or self-respect, self-government and Swaraj? Don't they ever feel that posterity is too chilly a prospect to work for and that perhaps our children will be wanting to revolt against the things we are trying to establish? Sometimes I feel like that—temporarily indifferent to the call of my country, the call of my people. But sooner or later I fall back in line, in the line of revolt, the only line which seems to

supply the *élan vital* or the soul force of the generation to which I belong. It grips me because I am born in it, with it, and born like my countrymen—dark.

IX

COLOUR

THE COLOUR PROBLEM THEREFORE IS AN OBSESSION of mine. My friends have told me that in spite of a complacent and self-possessed exterior, I suffer from an inferiority complex. Others have accused me of exhibitionism—a sort of short cut to the front page by way of the agony column. Others still have suggested that somewhere in my life there has been a white girl and a disappointed love affair for which only my complexion was responsible. All these explanations are ingenious and sometimes even amusing, but nowhere in all this gratuitous criticism do I find the real cause of my bitterness.

I have never forgotten my farewell speech to the Oxford Union. Elderly gentlemen from India have told me that in view of particularly happy memories I have of the Union at Oxford, my utterances on the Colour bar that day were ungracious and the moment was inappropriate and ill-timed. Excuses have been made for me that I was carried away by sentiment, and the thought of leaving the Chair of that Debating Society led me to make such a hasty utterance.

Few believe me now when I say that it was neither hasty nor made on the spur of the moment. I had waited for an opportunity ever since I first set foot in England, and felt that cold aloofness which is ladled out with spoonfuls of condescension to those like me who do not belong to a pure white race. Sometimes it has not stopped at being a mere aloofness. In its more violent forms it is capable of the worst insult and the grossest abuse that men can be made to suffer. It has always been the one burning problem of my life, and I have often felt I must not return to my final destination—the Tower of Silence—before I have paid my share of Silence—before I have paid my share of that little account that has yet to be settled between the races of this world who have suffered and those who have been the cause of suffering. So the Jew of Germany has an account to settle with Hitler and his Aryan thoroughbreds, the little Abyssinians of Addis Ababa have their little debt which they owe to little Cæsar, and a whole host of coloured people all over the world have a word to say to their pure white oppressors. I am one of the coloured men.

With this thought in my mind I went about the streets of Oxford, waiting, waiting for that day to come. There had always been a dark smouldering fire within me, which I found difficult to keep under control. I waited till my term of office was over. I wanted to carry out my duties without prejudice

or bias, even though one or two London newspapers had at that time given me sufficient provocation not to. So I came to the last debate of the term, when it is customary for the President to step down from the Chair and take his leave of the Union, making whatever observations he may care to make. It was usual that this little good-bye should take place at an early hour of the night and that the debate should close earlier than usual, so as to leave a little time to enjoy the last glasses of port in comfort without having to rush down the Corn to reach the gates of our college before the last stroke of midnight. Not many are present at this last debate, nor is it usually taken seriously. It has a friendly garden-party touch, a sinking of all political and personal grievances, and in its place *camaraderie*, *bonhomie* and even friendship. Only those who hover round the Union find time to attend this debate.

But I wanted a larger audience. I wanted to hear my voice echo in a crowded house. I wanted to shout my inner feelings till my voice broke through the four walls and reached the outside world. For weeks I thought hard of some plan to lure them into the Union. Only a sensational debate would compel their attendance. After racking my brains for days, I hit upon the idea of a mock trial of Mr. Winston Churchill, for whom I had an inexplicable but deep-rooted personal dislike,

and who was sufficiently unpopular at the Union to create the sort of atmosphere I wanted.

I chose the paper speakers with care. They were referred to as counsel for the defence and the prosecution. The house constituted the jury and I played the role of judge. The indictment against him was sweeping rather than specific. It contained only one count—"that he has constituted and does constitute a menace to the world". I made quite sure that the counsel for the prosecution were brilliant and those for the defence were not from amongst his ardent supporters. It was perhaps the most unfair trial of all times, but when one considers the trials that have recently taken place in the Courts of European Justice and the thousands that went to jail in India without a trial, my methods were not so unfair after all.

The debate was a great success, and the house found him guilty by a majority of four to one. I pronounced sentence, which was light and which was that he should be recommended for elevation to the peerage. All that was in good fun and not even the Right Honourable Gentleman had he been present would have objected to anything that was said or done. It put the audience in the right frame of mind. I took the chance and closed the debate while the house was still full. I then said what I wanted to say and I should be very surprised if there were any of my countrymen present who

disagreed with the sentiments I expressed.

I have been told that I of all persons to whom Oxford had been particularly kind, should have been the last to voice my opinions on the Colour bar. It was perhaps just why I did so, for was I to sell my soul for the Presidential Chair?

Sometimes I am told that being a Parsee my race is pure and white and that the colour of my skin is only the result of climatic conditions. But is not all colour the result of climatic conditions, or is it said anywhere in the Bible that God created two colours in men? The fact remains that I am regarded as a coloured man, whatever subtle differences are made. I have felt the prejudice of colour raised against me, and I will not scratch my skin to show the pure white layers that lie underneath. The problems of the coloured people have become my problems, if only because I look coloured. Nor have I ever felt the white man so superior that I should ever make any apology for my colour.

But some of my countrymen feel that the white races are superior. I see them walking in the streets of London, returning from a Bar lecture or on their way to the London School of Economics, their hands dug deep in their overcoat pockets, the hat drawn down well over their heads, as if they were afraid of being recognised as coloured men. Wherever I see them they appear to be alone and

isolated. Their dark features reveal a bitterness that has recently been stamped on them. That is the Colour bar from within. It is the instinctive withholding from certain things for fear of being humiliated. It springs from the desire to preserve one's self-respect, which is the last refuge of the oppressed, the unhappy, the poor, all those who have been denied something in life. They feel the tragedy of being brought into this world only to be humiliated by those of their fellow-men to whom the climate has been kinder. So colour which in most things is a source of joy is in man the cause of bitterness and sorrow.

I remember my first unpleasant experience in England. It was towards the end of my first term at Oxford, when the problem of finding a suitable place to spend my first vacation had bothered me quite a bit. I chanced to see an advertisement in one of the papers of an inclusive trip to Switzerland. I wrote for accommodation for a friend and myself and got it. They asked for a deposit and for my passport, to make sure that everything was in order. I knew my passport could take me anywhere except Soviet Russia, and so I only sent them the deposit. Two weeks later, I called in at the office of the tourist agency to collect my tickets. I wandered about the place waiting to be attended to, for it was quite late in the evening and the offices were closing for the day. At last a stout matronly woman

came up to me and asked me what I wanted. I explained and she assured me that there was bound to be a mistake. I produced their letter and the receipt for the deposit. Then she began to take notice. She asked for my passport and when she saw the mark of His Majesty's Government of India, her face fell. There was an awkward pause, while she surveyed me cap-à-pie. She fingered her chin and out came words that staggered me: "You may pass off as a Spaniard, but will your friend?"

I was nineteen then and flung out in the wide world for the first time after having always been in sight of home all those nineteen years. Oxford, England, Europe were all part of a dream that had only just come true. And then this cruel shattering of a vision which was to be the promised land! It was as if the end of the world had come and there was a lump in my throat, and even the large dimensions of this matronly figure became blurred as my eyes were clouded in the mist that precedes the pour. There was no use arguing, for the conditions of booking were quite clear. It allowed them to cancel a booking without giving reasons with those who did not belong to a pure white race. They returned my deposit, and even that as a special favour. That was kindly, gracious England, and I was a member of that great British Empire—a British subject by birth. Strange irony that when

I remember the days at school in India when I used to be dressed in a sailor suit and to sing " Rule Britannia ", and another song which ended with the line " Three cheers for the red, white and blue."

Stranger still when I think that at the same time not far from the offices of that tourist agency the Round Table Conference was being held to foster good-will among the people of our two countries, and to settle all disputes at a round table, which was symbolic of the equality of men.

It was a comparatively small incident, and it happened seven years ago, but for me it only happened yesterday, and the face of that woman still haunts me, standing before me with my passport in her hand. "You may pass off as a Spaniard ......" she said—seven years ago !

On the question of the Colour bar, I was asked by a German Jew who had fled from the Hitler terror, whether the coloured people themselves thought their colour was the right shade, or whether they looked upon the white people as being the chosen people and upon themselves as the outcasts. It was a difficult question to answer. The answer depends entirely on the individual—though the majority of individuals feel in their heart of hearts that colour is a misfortune in the world we live in. The reason is that taken as a whole the civilisation of to-day is essentially a white civilisation. The majority of those who rule the destiny of this world

are white races. Those who are coloured have been for many years the underdogs. So it is on the Continent of America, in India, Africa and so many other places in the world where the colour problem exists.

Sometimes I wonder what would happen if a revolution of coloured men all over the world would sweep the white races off the face of this world. Would we not then feel that ours is the right colour and would we not resent the presence amongst us of those who did not have the same shade of skin as ours? So that the right colour of your skin is to be decided by those who are in power, and it is the opportunity the white races have had to exploit the coloured people that has given rise to the Colour bar. As long as the white races remain in power the Colour bar will continue to exist in those parts of the world where that superiority is maintained.

So that looked at from the political point of view, the Colour bar in India will disappear with the establishment in India of self-government, of *purna swaraj* which is unadulterated, and unqualified by safeguards which leave the ultimate power in the hands of Whitehall and the English Houses of Parliament.

But there is another aspect of the problem which must not be overlooked. In it is to be found the real cause of the whole prejudice, and through it

some day perhaps we may even find the only solution. I refer to mixed marriages.

You have often heard people speak contemptibly of a man or a woman whose parents happened to be mixed. However legal the marriage ceremony may be, the offspring of such a mixed marriage is regarded as tainted even as illegitimate children are looked down upon though perhaps not to the same extent. For they have been born in violation of the rules of orthodoxy and they have disregarded the wishes of society. In this respect the rigidity of the convention has evolved into a code of morals, and to be unconventional is to be immoral as well.

It is difficult to decide whether the prejudice against the half-caste follows from the prejudice to colour, so that the trace of it in the children is as detestable as the original, and that therefore the Colour bar is imposed only to save white women from giving birth to half-caste children.

I am not a half-caste. I state this as a fact, not an opinion. But sometimes I am even taken for that, for my features are that of a much darker man than I am. I therefore know what it feels like to be taken for a half-caste, and to judge the reaction of others to those who are.

I covered the Coronation for an Indian paper. I had not till late in the day bothered to get myself a ticket to see the procession, partly because they were too expensive, and partly because it was too

medieval for my liking. It was a form of revivalism which was not in keeping with my ideals, and in this age of progress it was a mental retrogression. My reaction to it was the same as it is to a picture or a play period costume. There was something unreal about it, which did not appeal to my realism. There were also other aspects of it which I did not like—the ceremonial, the exhibition of armed forces, this emphasis on power, this militarism on display, this showing-off to the rest of the world what power there was in the British Empire, this Imperialism, this non-existent unity of Empire, mass psychology, crowds, little boys waving flags and cheering soldiers, old women whose memory went as far back as the days of Queen Victoria—all this I hated.

But I was a journalist, and as such one has to kneel at the altar of human interest and bow to the god of slop. It is the one profession which kills any spark of decency you may have in you. It is a racket which aims at drawing blood out of stone, and at wearing the sorrows of humanity on the sleeve of your indifference. To turn down a commission on the ground that it was too boring, would be almost unforgivable, though had I known that the fifteen hundred words I cabled to India, and which cost the paper more than fifteen pounds for the press cable, would be valued by the editor at the sum of one pound and five shillings, I would merely have seen the whole thing on the news-reel

the same day and read the reports of some of the star reporters of the London press for my own amusement and left the editor in India to write it himself.

However, I went to the Coronation, or at least as near as I could go, which in my case meant a seat in one of the stands opposite the Palace, obtained through the kind courtesy of India House and the High Commissioner for India. All this sounds frightfully important, but in reality it meant paying less for a seat than I would have had to had I gone to an agency which had bought large blocks of seats to re-sell them at enormous profits to those who were stupid enough to pay that price. And there were sufficient people in London at that time who paid for their folly.

My job was to find the Coronation imposing, majestic, awe-inspiring, breath-taking. It was the job of every journalist on the job. In my case, I did the whole thing so thoroughly that at the end of the day, when I came back dripping wet from the rain that drenched me to the skin, I was able to understand the feelings of those hundreds of thousands who lined the streets, all along the long Coronation route, and I tried to interpret that same feeling faithfully, till I began to feel as the others did who had flocked from the far corners of the Empire to testify their allegiance and loyalty to the common sovereign that rules over us all.

Traffic was almost at a stand-still, and to find a taxi was quite impossible. Tired and exhausted, I walked from the Palace to the Underground at Westminster, and came by tube as near home as I could. Over the last hundred yards I caught sight of a cab. It was the only one in the rank at Euston Station. I hailed it, but he made no effort to come towards me. I went over and inquired if he was free, and he nodded very curtly. I stepped in and gave the address to which I wished to be driven. This annoyed him more as it was a short fare and he hated being disturbed.

I was not alone. There was a lady with me. She remarked about his abruptness, and suggested I should tip him a little extra. Suddenly the window between the driver and us slammed. When I paid my fare, I remarked that his manners were not very brilliant. That was all I said and under the circumstances I felt justified. His face coloured immediately and he spouted with anger. "Manners, manners," he said, "am I to learn manners from a bloody half-caste ?" He was not a young man, otherwise I would have let him kiss my fist. He was a pleasantly greying man and a little too refined to be a taxi-driver. I merely took his number, at which he laughed and repeated the words again: "You bloody half-caste".

I knew then what it must feel like to be half-caste, which I was not. I knew then that even on

the occasion of a Coronation, when over the radio came messages from all parts of the Empire, followed by the King's Speech in which we were one large family, there was still the same prejudice in the hearts of the ordinary white man against those who were coloured or had a trace of it. It was a rude awakening, a return to reality after a few hours of idle dreaming. The struggle must go on—the struggle of the coloured people against the white oppression. Coronation or no Coronation we were still the coloured people of the Empire and could never belong to the same family.

I slept over this incident, but two days later I could still hear the voice of the cabman chuckling and repeating the words "You bloody half-caste". I reported the matter to the Commissioner of Police or whoever was the right authority. Days passed and one morning a policeman called to inquire about the incident. The driver had been asked for his explanation, and in his written statement said that he never uttered any such words, and what was more, he objected to my putting such words into his mouth! To show that I was not the type of person who was likely to report a matter like this without sufficient provocation, I had mentioned in my letter that I was personally known to the High Commissioner for India. I did not claim to be an intimate friend of so high an official, but the fact still remained that the High Commissioner at that

time knew members of my family, and I had met him personally one evening when he was particularly kind to me on account of his association with members of my family. On the strength of this I felt sure that there would be little doubt about my respectability. Unfortunately the High Commissioner was at that time on a visit to America, and I am still waiting to hear from our great Metropolitan Police what eventually happened. Perhaps the decision has been indefinitely postponed in the best traditions of British justice in the hope that both parties might feel that right was on their side.

One of the most amazing things about this Colour bar is that you very seldom meet the man who is the one who objects. So it is elusive, and you cannot get to grips with it. Always it is imposed by someone who explains that he or she has no such prejudice and goes on to say that unfortunately everyone is not like that, and after all, you can't change the world. How often have I heard it, how often will those who will come after me hear it, too? In all humility I ask, do you really want us to believe that we are all members of the same family? Or isn't there a gulf between us that can never be bridged?

A few weeks before the Coronation a coloured British subject was told by the barman of a West End hotel that he would not be served any drinks on the premises of that hotel until after the Corona-

tion, because their American residents who had come over for the Coronation would probably object to his colour. I wondered then whether the Coronation was for the people of the Empire or was it to amuse our American visitors? A similar incident once occurred in the South of France. The manager of a smart restaurant had refused admission to two coloured artists on exactly the same grounds. But the French authorities to whose attention this incident was brought would not tolerate any such discrimination. The law of France, they said, does not know the word "colour". Word was sent next day to the management of that restaurant in the South of France that the same two gentlemen would be visiting their restaurant that evening and that if the utmost courtesy was not shown to them, their establishment would forthwith be closed down. It was the authoritative voice of a free people who had paid heavily for their freedom that was speaking. American or no American, the law of France was the law of France, and those who came to that country must of necessity respect it. It made my heart throb to hear this story, which was told to me one night a few days after the West End hotel incident.

There may be nothing new in what I have to say on the Colour bar, but the fact that it has to be said so often is the greatest condemnation of the civilisation to which you belong and which has been thrust

on me and my people. For it is sad to think that in this Empire which professes to stand for all that is best and brightest in the history of humanity, it should be necessary for British subjects to tell the rest of the world that in that same Empire to which they belong there is discrimination against them because of their colour.

When I referred to these incidents in one of my articles on the Colour question, infuriated patriots complained that such grievances should not be ventilated in that paper. Are we to be denied even the right to express our feelings after you have humiliated us on every possible occasion? The secretary of an important organisation, with its headquarters in St. James's Street, wrote to me that he was surprised to read the article. Yes, a great many people are surprised, and not too pleasantly when it is pointed out that nothing is done in this country to prevent the recurrence of such incidents. Those in authority have done nothing about it. In the case of that West End hotel a threat from the proper quarters to withhold the licence would have brought the management to its senses.

But authority can only act if it has the people of this country behind it. If the people themselves want that discrimination maintained then the solution of the colour problem must be found elsewhere. For if there is no place in the countries

of Europe for the dark races of the Orient, then there is no place in the countries of Asia and Africa for the white races that have established themselves there. Some day the issue will come to that, and then a few more people will be surprised. Let's have it straight from the shoulder.

And yet they say there is no Colour bar in England. Isn't it strange that if there is a coloured man in a bus or a tube, the seat next to him is the last one to be filled? Isn't it strange that when you apply for a room in a boarding-house or a residential hotel which is advertising rooms to let, they happen to have been just let, though the advertisement continues to appear in the same paper the next day? Isn't it strange that if a dark young man goes to a palais de dance at a seaside resort or in the suburbs of London all the dance hostesses appear to be engaged—these same women who are yours for sixpence?

You would have thought that this mother country would have found a way of dealing with these regretable incidents. You would have thought that something would be done to make this "family" idea come true. You would have thought that the India Office would spring to action if a hotel refused admission to a British subject on grounds of his colour. You would have thought that the Secretary of State for India or the Home Office would bring pressure upon the L.C.C. to

withdraw the licence of that hotel. You would have thought that England which has appointed itself trustee for three hundred and fifty million people—all coloured—would have done something about the trust imposed upon them. We dogs bark, but, alas, the caravan goes on!

It is bad enough to have the door slammed on your face by English people in England, and to have to suffer humiliation at the hands of taxi-drivers and boarding-house landladies, but to have this done to you in the land of your fathers is stretching our endurance too far.

When Queen Victoria became Empress of India she is supposed to have said, if Mr. Herbert Wilcox's representation of that historic scene is correct, that there was to be no hatred of a brown skin, or words to that effect. In any case the idea underlying this was that there was to be no distinction among her subjects on the grounds of colour. Later sovereigns have echoed that sentiment. We have been referred to as members of the same family. It is therefore all the more difficult to understand why English subjects of the same monarch who would die for their king disregard the sentiments of their monarch on this most vital issue. Why do the many Englishmen who come to India in the service of their sovereign fail to respect this equality of men irrespective of their colour? And that is not too unreasonable a question to ask.

There is a hitherto unpublished story of the Duke of Windsor as Prince of Wales when he was at Biarritz. At the Casino Belle Vue there was a cabaret known as the Merry Box. Some coloured artists were working there. The Prince of Wales used to watch the cabaret sometimes and had seen these artists perform. One evening after their turn was completed two of the coloured artists were asked by a party of Americans to join their table, and they spent a pleasant evening together, drinking and chatting. Next day, before starting the evening's work, the two coloured artists dropped in for a drink at the Bar Basque, one of the chic spots of Biarritz. It was packed out and there was not a single table available. They looked round and spotted the Americans of the evening before. Naturally they went over to greet them. To their embarrassment, they found they were cut dead, for the Americans turned their faces away as if they had never met before. It was one of those moments that seemed to last a lifetime. The two dark men stood rooted to the ground. Everybody noticed what happened. Suddenly from a table near by a voice said: "Hello, boys, have a drink with me." When they turned they saw it was the Prince of Wales, whom they had never met before. He had made them feel human.

I heard this from one of the artists themselves. I had met him in Paris, and later I saw him again in

London, when among other things we talked about the colour question. He told me to read Nancy Cunard's anthology on the negro and offered to lend me his copy. When I went to his house to collect this huge volume of data on the coloured man, I noticed a picture of the Duke of Windsor on his mantelpiece. It has been cut out from an ordinary newspaper and framed. I ask him why he kept this picture, and it was then that he told me the story of Biarritz, finishing with: "It was only a small incident, but it meant so much at that moment, and I have always felt grateful. I want always to remember him. That's all."

When I think of the numerous third-rate Englishmen in India who are contemptible in their attitude towards the Indian because of his colour, I feel that these "box-wallas" and "pucka-sahibs" have a lot to learn from the first gentleman in the land. But our misfortune is that the more well-bred Englishmen do not come our way, and if they do they are inclined to forget their breeding for a while. They are not afraid of pouring out insults on coloured people, because they know that no harm can come to them if the under-dog should revolt, so long as there is the British Army in India and soldiers with bayonets to protect them.

Nancy Cunard's book contains some amazing revelations on the colour question. It is essentially from the negro's point of view, but a great deal of

what is said applies to us just as well. She has collected an enormous amount of material on the Colour bar. Letters to and from the Government by the score. One letter from the Home Office in reply to a complaint regarding the refusal of a restaurant to serve a coloured student of Middle Temple who had taken an English lady there for tea was of two lines. It read as follows: "Sir, I am directed by the Secretary of State to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 9th February relating to Essex-Stairs Tea Rooms, Strand. Refusal to serve coloured man and white woman. I am, sir, etc. etc.".

Nancy Cunard says: "The style of the reply may be particularly noted: 'Refusal to serve coloured man and white woman'—a pair of objects. No one can think that a Government that can send such an answer—which is no answer at all, but a mere chit of acknowledgment—is going to pay the slightest attention to any number of insults to coloured people. 'Teach niggers their "place"' is as much the Government view as it has ever been. If this were not so, the Government would take a hand in putting a stop to such injuries.

"But, someone will say, it is not a Government matter. It is private concern between hotel and restaurant, manager and client! So, one might think, would be the right to consume beer and spirits and to pay for the right of spending all night

in dancing if one chose to. These are certainly private enough matters and yet we have semi-prohibition and legislation against enjoyment, both of which are attacks on our personal rights. The Government is above interfering in a thing of such magnitude as the Colour bar. Or—the Government is powerless. In which case it is at the mercy of a pack of inn-keepers and publicans.

" Now when some American tried to foist their prejudice on to some restaurant and cabaret directors in France, resulting in several cases of insult to coloured people in the last five or six years, the French Government immediately acted *and closed* these places, in one instance at least for as long as two weeks. This was not effected after an involved legal operation, but *overnight.* And a cabaret can lose a whole stack of money in a fortnight. The French know that the economic lever is the only one that counts. We should see the difference if it were made to function in England."

But in England we are still at the stage of making long speeches about the equality of races, irrespective of what may happen in real life. The *Negro Worker* of March, 1932, puts it bluntly when it says: "Despite the fact that it is otherwise, British imperialist agents in the colonies, especially the Church of England missionaries, try to create the impression among the native peoples that no matter

what injustices they suffer in the colonies, in England a warm welcome awaits them! These apologists of British imperialism try their best to paint England as the most democratic country in the world, where all peoples, irrespective of colour or race, are treated as equals. However, every negro, Indian, Arab or other coloured person who has ever lived in England knows from actual experience that all this missionary twaddle is nothing else but a lie."

So that the Colour bar is something real—something we have felt. It is not merely an obsession of those of us who complain about it. But some day the worm will turn. Some day the oppressed of this world who are now made to walk with their heads bent low, will find dignity and peace and greatness again. To that we dedicate ourselves.

X

LOVE, SEX AND MORALS

WHEN I FIRST CAME TO EUROPE I WAS CAUTIOUSLY rushed across the Continent in the P. and O. special and landed safely on English soil, even though there was no pressing reason why I should be in London so soon. I felt then that I had been cheated out of a glimpse of Paris, where I was told nude women were presented through the courtesy of the Folies Bergére. I had seen pictures which were referred to as French post-cards, which some enterprising bookstall vendor in Bombay had managed to procure for sale at exorbitant prices. This desire to become anatomical is because our sex education is bad and our knowledge of "the facts of life" superficial. I was given to understand there were only two possible types in women—prostitutes and respectable women, and that the latter predominated by an overwhelming majority. There was no half-way, for those who were respectable were required to be virginal until marriage and then faithful unto the end. There is very little in India of what is called the casual affair—no nibbling with the fruit of the forbidden tree. The enthusiastic

amateur is almost unknown in India, except for a few stray girls from medical colleges, nurses, Anglo-Indian typists and Eurasian shop-girls.

Sex in India is regarded as a base instinct. When a married couple indulge in it, it is respectable merely because it is a necessary precedent to the breeding of children. But apart from this, sex has no justification. The mutual attraction of two hetero-sexual and perfectly homogeneous bodies, eventually culminating in the expression of their desire, is regarded as gross immorality. There is no justification for sex, which is normal in two healthy bodies who have found the co-efficient of mutual attraction. Across all that is written the one word "Taboo".

Marriages in India are as a rule arranged. The pedigree of both parties is closely examined. References are taken up as to the character, the financial position, the health of the two parties. Sometimes the stars are consulted. If all reports are satisfactory, the marriage takes place with due solemnities. It is a mother-in-law's show, and the bride and groom play a very insignificant part in the whole proceeding.

In this mad rush to produce ideal marriages and stud children, one fact is often overlooked. Do these two young people who are about to be joined in holy matrimony feel any physical attraction towards each other? No one can make two people

happy who do not feel a mutual sex-attraction.

But that is India. It has pinned its faith to marriage and does not like the giving of free samples. With this sort of highly moral background we young men come to England. After a year in the company of those whose ideas on sex and morals are different from those of our parents, we begin to look around. We pick up the threads where others, who have gone before us, have left off. We begin to frequent the same places. We look around.

The art of picking-up we learn when we come to the West. It is acquired after much practice and requires a certain finesse and subtlety to save it from being crudely vulgar. It is a game that is usually played by two people. There are no rules except that you must play always fair, have patience and never take the first "no" for an answer. All this is quite unknown in India. It is only the brothel or nothing at all, and more often than not, it is nothing at all. Time has brought about many changes and the Western influence can be felt in the large cities, where Society has tried to imitate the sophistication of the West, but the little game of *cherchez la femme* is still played only by the very few. It is like baseball is in England—not a national game.

Not so long ago there were whole districts in Bombay which were infested with brothels, and as you passed through these in an open car in the

evenings, the women would call out to you from their windows. You could see their squalid little rooms gaily decorated, little lights flickering on the walls, casting shadows that played funny tricks of light and shade. Some of them were young, their dark faces shining as the street lamp reflected on their countenances. Oil on their jet black hair, gold bangles on their arms. All this you could see even as the car tore down the street. That was prostitution in India. It was like cold meat served the day after without any garnishing. Cold raw meat.

The little girls that pace up and down Piccadilly and hang out at the corner of Bond Street accosting gentlemen in evening clothes are in comparison refined, and those of Paris are even more so. I recollect a little rendezvous house in the rue de Bray near the Etoile. It was one of the more sophisticated of its kind. As we rang the bell, a buxom old concierge came to the door. The two of us were shown into a small waiting-room, where a radio-gram played soft soulful music. We sat down and picked up one of the magazines that lay in a heap on the table. It corresponded to the waiting-room of a Harley Street specialist. A few minutes elapsed and a well-dressed, stout, prosperous-looking madame entered and greeted us. She escorted us to another room. This was larger and more elaborately decorated. There was no music and the lights were bright and the chandelier that

hung in the centre of the room was in keeping with the furniture which took its name from one of the Louis. We were offered drinks which were on the house. We were asked our requirements. Dark or fair. Tall or short, plump, slim? It was like ordering a steak—underdone, overdone, medium! We specified. She left us alone for a few moments and returned. One by one the women trooped in, and we were introduced. There was never more than one girl in the room at a time. So she introduced us in turn to a handful, all clean, well-dressed healthy young women, who corresponded to the type asked for. When the last one had gone, the madame turned to us and asked what we thought of her selection. It was difficult to choose. At this stage the process of elimination was resorted to, till our minds were made up. The madame then noted her approval with the monosyllable "Bon". The little details of business were discussed very delicately by the madame. Finally we parted, each to a different little *chambre*. It was a small little bed-sitter, where the lights were soft, the furniture simple but attractive, the sheets clean, cigarettes in a box by the bed, salted almonds, an unopened bottle of champagne, two glasses, a washstand, clean towels. So the little affair began, and when it finished you still felt clean, healthy, and still somewhat of a man. Two or three hours elapsed between the time you first entered the

house in rue de Bray and the time you left it. Three hundred-franc notes was the only difference you noticed !

Yet how different it all was from the way in which sex was served in the back streets of Bombay. Even when these houses were abolished by a highly moral municipal corporation, they soon reappeared under new titles. Massage institutes sprang up and dancing clubs, and the women still continued to look out of the windows. Those women who could afford it shared a flat and did their entertaining at home to a select circle of intimate friends. It was like a few financiers cornering the shares in a public company. That was about the only difference the cleaning up meant. It made things more difficult for the poor man, and more discreet for the rich. So much for commercialised sex.

One of the most difficult things for an Indian coming over to England for the first time is to tell a lady from one who is not. White women in large quantities seem all alike. At first sight they all look so damned respectable. To approach them with any success seems quite impossible, and then there is always the colour complex. But nothing is so stimulating to self-assurance as success, and at the end of a handful of conquest you begin to feel blasé and the passionate kisses of painted lips you wipe carelessly away. As your experience increases the more careless and disrespectful is your attitude

towards women, and like all things they come to you the less you want them. That is how it is in the West, that is how it will never be in the East.

Sometimes, sitting out on the lawn in India, late after dinner when the sky is just one orgy of bright shining stars, I yearn for a seat in a café on the Elysées in Paris, if only to sit alone and sip a cognac and look at life as it passes incessantly by. Once it meant nothing, except just people and more people such as you would see in any large city of the world. But a time came when these people began to mean something to me—these people whom I had never seen or known, and whom I would never see again. There were little adventures which to the casual observer meant nothing. Things happen to you in a split second in that French metropolis, which could never happen in a lifetime in India. But your timing has to be accurate—dead accurate. It may be a side glance, or a slight stare, a twinkle of the eye, the smoke from a cigarette, and there is no knowing where it may end.

But somehow in India it never happens. You ask a girl out to the pictures and her mother begins to wonder whether your intentions are honourable, whether you can support her, whether the marriage would be a success, and would the children be defective. Even among the more enlightened people there is a tendency to see that a young girl is not left alone with a young man, unless they are on

the verge of engagement, and if they are seen about too frequently together the engagement is presumed. They never get any further than holding hands, and then they follow it up by a telephone call in which so little is said, and even that in a stupid stutter that makes a mockery of the most beautiful romance. Little words are whispered when mothers are busy admiring each other's *sarees*—little words that mean nothing, but want to say so much. There is a sigh, a wistful look in their eyes, a handshake which says "till we can speak again," and that is all.

From such beginnings springs romance. Often when they have not even kissed each other they decide to ask their parents for consent to get engaged. Months later, on an auspicious date which is carefully chosen, the marriage takes place. And these two young people taste the first joys of life on their wedding night—these two young people whose conception of sex is based on nothing more than one of the many books of Marie Stopes.

Yet even this is modern India. For lower down the scale of enlightened people there is not even a glimpse of the bride. Man takes woman on spec and on the advice of female relatives who have visited her. In those parts of India where the *purdah* still covers the woman's face, marriage becomes a mockery—like fishing a packet from a lucky dip at the village fair. The rigour of ortho-

doxy has attempted an explanation for these customs, which have survived the generation to which they belonged, but for us it is nothing more than a proof of the backwardness of our people, the illiteracy which prevails in India and which two hundred years of British rule have not yet been able to wipe out.

So that this chapter on love, sex, and morals can hardly be drawn from the masses. Their struggle for existence leaves them little time for refined emotions, and morality is only an aspect of the economic problem and is judged by them in terms of their commercial dealings with each other and the honesty or dishonesty that emanates from such association.

As I look at a picture of the Taj at Agra, I wonder how this monument of man's eternal love should ever have sprung up on Indian soil. I have yet to see it with my own eyes—a sight which I have reserved for the future, when the toil of years has earned me a glimpse at this mausoleum in white marble, in which is entombed a love which it is the birthright of every man to experience at least once in his life. It makes me wonder whether the legend of the Taj is really the love story of India, or whether it is an interpolation that crept in much later to justify this æsthetically beautiful but impracticable building. Who knows but that one day its white marble will be speckled with drops of

blood which have spouted from the dead and the wounded, when the weapons of civilisation have brought the horrors of modern war nearer to us. Then perhaps we shall see the neutral flag of the Red Cross surmounted on the dome, and the tears of the living will flow even as the little stream does which runs through its spacious grounds. For the Taj as it stands is far too beautiful a monument of love—this emotion which the rigid rules of orthodox Indian opinion have denied to the young. There can be no love between two people who are brought together by their parents for the sole purpose of breeding stud children in as great a standard of comfort and of security as possible.

I have seen some of our young men in love. It takes the form of lonesome pining, long walks by the shore, visits to the ladies gymkhana on men's day, entering for the mixed doubles of the Badminton tournament, writing doggerel that embraces the sun, the moon, the stars, in verse which is suited to the music-halls of the 'nineties, pictures in their breastpockets, sleepless nights, day-dreams, and every other shape and form of psychological reaction which can result from repression, from the frustration of man's natural desires and from the suppression of the sex-urge on grounds of morality and by the laws of "decent" living.

An eminently respectable Indian gentleman, returning to India with an aunt of mine, read a

chapter on sex in a skit I attempted on the English, and passed judgment that young men like me who came to England should concentrate more on our studies than on the vices of the country. He complained that the trouble about Indian students in England was that they knew far too much about women and far too little about the things that really matter in life.

That is true, but it can be justified. There are in the first place more opportunities for us to make the acquaintance of women in England than in India. It may have something to do with the fact that there are far too many surplus women in England who are glad to be taken out and to have money spent on them. In some cases it gives the girls a chance of getting out of the dull monotony of their existence, in other cases it is the novelty of it, the idea that this man is different from the colourless specimens which she has so far encountered; all these and many more reasons explain the attitude of white women to the dark races of the Orient. There is also one other explanation, which is universally known, but seldom so blatantly revealed. It is, if I may borrow the language of the *Esquire*, that Anglo-Saxons make lousy lovers.

I noticed at a night club in London, which is requented by a lot of coloured people, the number fof smart English women who came with their husbands, their boy friends, their casual acquain-

tances, and the look of disgust and fright on the faces of these women as they entered and saw thick-set negroes with huge lips and dilated nostrils. They hardly danced, and when they did they never enjoyed the music, which syncopated to a rhythm to which they were not accustomed, and which the more sophisticated haunts of the West End did not provide. But later, for some mysterious reason, they came again, and the look on their faces was not of boredom nor of fright. And their partners were not the same. Gradually the rhythm grew on them, and they began to understand that mysterious something that takes jazz out of the classification of distorted noise. Why did they come again? Was it the novelty of the place, or its essential sensuality?

One evening, across the room on the far side, I saw a couple of young Mayfairites. There was little doubt about their identity. The man was young, wore the old boy's tie of one of the better known of English public schools; his suit had been cut by a Saville Row tailor; he probably owned a Bentley and his address was a guarantee that his cheques would not be dishonoured. The woman with him was "frightfully" English. She spoke in a husky voice. The price of her dress would easily keep a middle-class English family in food and clothing for a week, with a visit to the dress-circle of any London theatre. So they sat, these two,

young people, bored with each other, bored with the music and the surroundings, bored with life. On the table was a bottle of gin and several baby tonics, and they constantly filled their glasses, and continued to look bored. Once or twice they got up and hobbled about the floor, being pushed hither and thither in the crowded room, because they could not dance the way the others did. So they returned to their tables and drank more gin and more tonic-water. And the hours passed. Then I noticed the man's head bend low, his eyes full of sleep, drooping, drowsy because of the alcohol he had consumed. Gradually he fell asleep on the table, resting his tired head on crossed hands, while the girl with him began to wake up and to feel the pulse of life which was beating around her. He would not awake, though she tried hard to shake him. She gave it up and watched the others enjoy themselves. Then came a burly negro, tall, strapping, his broad shoulders held well back and a lascivious smile of thick lips on his broad face. He asked her for the dance. It startled her. She turned to her partner, who was asleep, shrugged her shoulders, got up and danced. I watched them dance. The sight amused me. First the distance at which she held herself, then the break of a smile on her face, gentle conversation, more smiles, the gradual disappearance of that restraint, an occasional look at her partner, then closer to him, her

eyes looking down, closer again, her breasts pressed against the lapels of his coat, her eyes closing more, her body drawing closer into him, the heat of the rhythm, the warmth of the bodies, closer, closer to him, the grasp of her hand on his arm, thighs pressed against thighs, body syncopating to body, the throbbing inside of her, her last struggle with herself, the deliverance, the look in her eyes as she opened them, the satisfaction, the gratitude when the dance was over.

Half an hour later the young man sitting beside her got up, apologised, said it was getting late. They gathered their belongings and disappeared—back to their respectable homes in Mayfair or wherever they lived.

I wondered then what that eminently respectable Indian gentleman would have had to say had he watched this depravity. Would he still have wondered why we young men who come to England know too much about women and too little about the things that really matter in life ? With the lack of opportunity in India for a casual affair, our eyes are particularly keen to track down whatever we can find when we first come to England, and to study this complicated problem of sex from every possible angle, so that when we go back to India and think of marriage we have some understanding of the real conception of the sexual aspect of marriage. Then we get some idea of the difference

between your women and ours. Then also do we see how ridiculous is the classification of women into those who are moral and those who are immoral. More types begin to take shape—types that vary in looks, in emotions, in ideals. Which of these is representative of your women, and which among the types we see in India represents the Indian woman ?

You have seen somewhere in Regent Street an Oriental phantasy in the shape of an Indian lady going in and out of expensive shops, her large body draped in yards of multi-coloured silk, and on top a coat of mink or sable or a collar of twin silver foxes. She is very probably the wife of some important Indian gentleman, an Indian Prince, a high Government official, or a wealthy Marwari banker, who has come to England for business or for pleasure. And as you see her stepping into her expensive limousine you have wondered whether all Indian women were like that. On the films you have seen our harems, which an imaginative producer has depicted, complete with the sultan and his brace of eunuchs. And you have thought, maybe, this is Mother India.

Out in India we, too, have heard of Helen of Troy, Lady Astor, and Rebecca West and wondered whether they typified the women of the West. Somewhere between these three we may arrive at the perfect pattern of Western womanhood—taking the face of Helen, the broad humanitarianism of

the noble lady, the intellectual sophistication of Rebecca West. But would such a composite woman give an accurate idea of the women of the West? And is the fat lady shopping in Regent Street typical of ours?

The backbone of England is "the British mother"—solid and matronly. She constitutes the greater part of your news-reading, radio-listening public, and that is, after all, what constitutes a nation. Moral, thrifty, God-fearing, child-bearing—she is a sort of puritanical symbol for everything that is noble and uplifting. Living her life in red brick houses, she is content to spend the autumn of her life surrounded by her children and her children's children, to whom she can relate the incidents of her early life, her loves, her adventures, her joys, her sorrows. Her ideas of morality and of decent living she shouts from the house-tops—this woman with ample bosoms and a prosperous chest, this mother of twins, triplets or what have you—this Mother England.

In sharp contrast you have your bits of fluff—little girls who, in summer, live in bathing pools and shoot round from party to party in flimsy garments. They are harmless, highly peroxided, painted creatures. Thirsting for sensation, thirsting for sophistication, this modern flapper is a product of this neo-modern civilisation which has brought her Cutex and Kleanex and all that sophisticated

sanitation that is wrapped up in pink and blue parcels and labelled "x". With what little she has she tries to make her world an imitation of her dream—while patching her brassiere to keep up her breasts—patching, patching all the time. It is the old story of the small-town girl who has wandered to the great metropolis. Someone had said: "With a face like that, you ought to be in pictures". "You wouldn't fool me, mister, would you?" Now she has joined the grand parade, one more extra in the film they called "Life". After all, it was for art's sake, wasn't it? She doesn't know. She is left holding the baby.

When I enter the hot-houses in Grosvenor Street and Park Lane, I see another type of English womanhood. These are the little rosebuds that are just beginning to "come out". It is a bevy of giggling debs who profess to be devotees of art and beauty. They are to be seen at the First Night of the more spectacular of West End shows, and later they dine at the Savoy and the Café de Paris. High-steppers into life! Faces worthy of Lenare and Laszlo! Even Hogarth and Cézanne! Food for gossip columns! The centre page of the *Sketch* and the *Tatler*! Pedigree England!

Clad in the soft gowns of Hartnell and Schiaparelli these little socialities have at an early age toured the capitals of Europe. Education covers a multitude of sins and to hook a title is nine-tenths of the

degree. They try for a new-laid English peer or a forgotten Polish Count. Failing that, even a Spanish " Markee ".

Then come those poor women of yours "who wear glasses, at whom your men won't even make passes ". These poor little sex-starved girls go to bed with a picture of some Prince Charming. They are the fans who will travel to the far corners of the world for a glimpse of Clark Gable or Robert Taylor. Virgins all by necessity, not by conviction! They want a home, they want children, they want a night in bed with anyone who will have them. Meanwhile, they spend their lives nursing pimples.

Under a starry Hawaiian sky a dark-haired Romeo whispered in her ear an enchanted tale of love and romance. Sweet music was in the air. There under the heavens in the pale blue moonlight he held her close, his warm lips on her neck. " I've got you under my skin," he said. So she dreams at night and with the awakening comes a fresh crop of pimples. Poor little sex-starved girls! They strike for red pimples as Communists strike for red principles.

And now to some of our women—the women of India. I see her now, her picture is forever before me. In tone she is soft, in complexion dark, and in her philosophy she is simple. Her eyes are brown, her features plain, her mouth somewhat sensitive. There is nothing extraordinary about her, but in her

apparent simplicity lies some of her charm. Her countenance is perpetually in repose and there is grace in her unaffected dignity. She is intensely feminine. That is perhaps the most significant fact about her. That is my picture of the Indian woman.

But they are not all like that. We have our Anglicised specimens who wear short hair, sip cocktails and drawl. They sit back in their palatial houses and in the comforts of their luxurious homes talk glibly of the economic emancipation of women, and expound on the depression that has swept over the countries of the world. Their intellectual sophistication they owe to Lawrence and Radclyffe Hall and they even question the Judgment of Paris. We have such women as that.

Yet how different this picture is from the Indian woman of a few years ago. Then she lived her life in the seclusion of the zenana, where no man was allowed, and when she left her home she would hide her face from the outside world. The strict rigour of social custom had made the *purdah* an essential feature of her every-day existence.

The sophistication of the West had not found in her an easy victim, and across painted lips and plucked eyebrows was written the one word "Taboo". But to-day the accessories of the lady's boudoir have found their way into the Indian home, and rouge and lipstick have a place in the Society

woman's handbag. With this has come the craze for slimming—snaky hips, and Arden complexions, and Veet under the arm-pits. But we do not specialise in this skin-and-bone variety, for we, too, have our fat women, upholstered like sofas for comfort and endurance. Fed on fat and buttered lentils, they take up a lot of space. Their ears and noses have been pierced from early childhood, so they can wear chunks of gold as ornaments. Rows and rows of bangles run up their massive arms. As they walk with measured steps beneath the burden of their fat thighs, little bells tinkle at their feet like the curfew that tolls the knell.....

On the other hand the streets of some of the largest of our cities present the horrid spectacle of beggar women with half-eaten breasts, clutching in one hand a tin can into which a generous passer-by drops an occasional coin, in the other a child which they had no right to bring into the world. No mind, no soul, and what's left of the body? Yet they are as much ours as those exotic princesses who have at some time graced the West with their presence.

But way out in the open fields, working on the land in the sweltering heat is the female labourer, whose poverty leaves her untouched by the fashions and foibles of her sex. She is content to be clad for a whole year in one solitary garment which does not cost more than a few shillings until on some

festival day she can afford the luxury of a new one. This sturdy Indian woman is known to do hard work and to carry heavy loads even on the eve of giving birth to her child. In that part of the world to which she belongs, a woman is expected to do the work of a man, and in the evening, when the sun goes down, to clean her cow-dung hut, to cook food and to wash the pots and pans from which her man has eaten.

Uneducated in the ways of the civilised world, untutored in the ways of science and hygiene, her life is wrapped up in superstitious beliefs which could bear no logical reasoning, and she still offers strange sacrifices to appease the wrath of the gods.

All this we have and more. Dancing girls in temples. You have heard of them. Dedicated to the service of the gods—human sacrifices that might easily have appeased the wrath of Jupiter and Juno, and the rest of the old mighties. These relics of an outworn creed, these anachronisms of modern India, these two chapters of Katherine Mayo we still have.

It is all so different from that of the Indian lady shopping in Regent street and freezing in the English winter in spite of her coat of mink or sable and her collar of twin silver foxes.

But the change in the women of India is not entirely in the direction of Regent Street. With the awakening of national consciousness they cast off

their veil of modesty to form the front line of the march of Independence from one end of the country to the other. It was the most unbelievable spectacle that had presented itself almost overnight, for they had flung themselves into the vortex of politics—these same women who had never before stepped out of their homes into the open world. Now they were to be seen picketing the shops and helping the National Movement in whatever manner they could. In *Swadeshi* stores they sold home-spun cloth and home-made articles in order to stimulate the industries which were struggling for their existence. Clad in *sarees* of saffron-coloured material they marched to the sea-shore to break the Salt Laws, marching, marching incessantly to the tune of "Bande Matram." It was the most stubborn resistance that law and authority in India ever encountered. So that years of social prejudice and dogma were brushed aside for the cause of freedom and the liberation of humanity.

I remember how at the inauguration of the *khaddar* movement, Indian women were reluctant to give up the beautiful silks that came from Paris and Shanghai for home-spun cotton and Benares silk. These were not elegant enough. But fashions change and with them even the ways of thinking. And these same women are now proud to wear the garments which they spurned only a few years ago.

All these women we have in India. You wouldn't believe they could exist in the same country all at once. One characteristic is, however, common to them. It is that they have contrived to remain simple and naïve and untouched by all the affectation which we have learnt to associate with modern women of other countries.

I turn once again to the little picture before me. She is still soft and dark and simple. The eyes, the mouth are still the same. Time has not made this woman cold and calculating and blasée. She has retained her freshness towards life. In this age of tottering ideals she seems to have a design for living. She is capable of normal affections without being sloppy. She is content with simple things in life and gold-digging is not one of her pastimes. That is the little woman in my picture. That is the woman who, in spite of all other varieties typifies for me the women of India—our women. But sex she will not dabble in unless it is sprinkled with holy water and blessed by a minister of God. That is the most striking difference that we who come to England notice when speaking of the women of our two countries. Very likely it is not a fair comparison, but it is the general impression that is made on us that counts, in spite of the individuals that are the exceptions It is difficult to say whether it is the character of our women that influences their attitude to sex or whether it is our over

cautiousness in all matters pertaining to sex that affects our women. But the conclusion we come to is that it is more difficult to persuade an Indian woman to have a casual affair than it is to persuade anyone in England.

Comparisons are always odious, and those of this kind are bound to anger a great many people. Nor is the comparison intended to show the women of India to any advantage. Ignorance of sex is not something to be proud of, and the statement that there is more possibility of amateur sex in England than in India is a fact, not an opinion. I don't wonder that our young men prefer to bed in England than to hold hands in India.

But there are other aspects of sex, which are comparatively unknown in India. I remember being sconced one night at Oxford by the senior scholar at the table for referring to a rather effeminate young man as a "sissy". It was during my first week at Oxford, and, to be honest, I did not know the real significance of the word. I had used it rather as meaning "young Apollo". To me it did not connote homosexuality, nor was I aware that this was regarded as a form of intellectual sophistication in this part of the world. But then, I had never been to an English Public School.

I had heard of cases in India, particularly in the north, of sturdy Pathans slaking their needs in the bodies of little boys who were unaware of its sexual

significance. Later, when wading through the Criminal Procedure Code, I discovered that this was an offence, punishable by a long term of imprisonment, but that was all. I did not associate it with the more refined type of young men, whom I encountered at the University, or among the more intellectual element I ran into during seven years in England.

But it is among the highbrows that homosexuality thrives. Our education in India does not even hint at these sexual practices of the world, and we Indians who come to England are a bit shaken when we first encounter it in others. Consequently we are apt to find ourselves in some embarrassing situations, from which it is rather unpleasant to extricate ourselves.

We were a group of friends dining at Oxford on the night when the Union results were declared. Two of us, Michael Foot and myself, had just been declared elected to the office to which we aspired. Michael became Treasurer and I scraped in as Secretary. Tony Greenwood, the third of our gang, had been unfortunate in being beaten that term and had to wait till the next to become President. So we were celebrating two successes and drowning our sorrow at Tony's failure—Michael drinking milk, a Cornish custom. It was, I believe, a Saturday night, and a Saturday night at Oxford was one of those things worth writing home about—

though not necessarily to your parents! At the table next to us sat two smartly dressed, middle-aged men, who had obviously come up for the day. They were well-bred, seemed intellectual and were certainly well-to-do. They appeared to be interested in our table, which was natural as we felt particularly elated and life seemed very cheerful, when interpreted through the courtesy of a well-stocked cellar. One of the two men looked at me as if he knew me, and every time I looked that way be seemed to be wanting to say something. I was rather inebriated and, rubbing my eyes, I looked at him to see if I could recollect his face. He immediately apologised, and said he could not help admiring my hand which he said were artistic! I thanked him, standing up to bow, for alcohol has the effect of making me unduly courteous. But I felt rather embarrassed that such a compliment should come from a man. However, he also added his congratulations on our success at the Union, and this he gathered from our conversation. A little later he interrupted again and presented his card, and I gave him my name in return, and he said I must have lunch with him, and I said it was very kind of him, and there the matter ended.

Next morning I got up very late. My landlady, who had heard of my election, was not surprised when I came down the stairs about noon, nursing a heavy head and asking for aspirin. I had my coffee

and stepped into my bath, where I was falling comfortably asleep when there was a knock at the bath-room door and the landlady shouted from outside to say there was a gentleman to see me. I did not recollect the name, but asked her to make him wait. When I dressed and came down, he had gone, but I found an invitation to lunch the same afternoon, with a note to say that we had met the night before at dinner, and that he was sitting at the adjacent table. I looked for his card, which was still in the pocket of my coat. As I had no particular engagement for lunch, I decided to go. When I arrived he was very glad to see me. There were two others in his lunch party, one particularly objectionable Oxford character, and the other was his companion from the night before. I noticed when we shook hands that he patted my hands. He remarked about them again. I felt very uncomfortable, not being used to having my hands petted by those of my own sex. However, we lunched. During lunch he asked me if I was the same person about whom there was a reference in the the current number of the *Isis*, as having worn a "chemise bleu à la Russe" and I said I was. Later, after coffee and liqueurs, he took me aside and said he had something to say to me, which he did. It was a point-blank assertion of his intention, prefaced by an apology in case I should be offended. There was little else to be said. I told him I was

sorry I had given him that impression, and that had I any suspicion I should not have given him false hopes, which apparently I inadvertently did. He asked me to forget the incident and in any case not to mention it with his name. It was rather a pathetic sight, for I asked him why he was so ashamed of being associated with that reputation when he obviously had been blatantly crude about it himself. He drew a deep breath and said: "I have a son at Oxford—your age—I wouldn't like him to know".

He walked away, and I have often wondered what could possibly have driven him to deviate from the course of nature. Till then I had always believed that all this talk about homosexuality was eye-wash and that respectable people with any education whatever never dabbled in such things. But I was judging from my knowledge of India, which in matters of sex is somewhat naïve and simple. Later, when I read Lawrence of Arabia, I was able to understand that there was another point of view, and that even though I did not sympathise with it, I had to recognise it as the point of view of a section of civilised Society who knew what it was doing and got a satisfaction in the doing of it. There is a sentence in *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* which explains what I am trying to say:

"Some began to justify this sterile process, and

swore that friends quivering together in the yielding sand with intimate hot limbs in supreme embrace, found there hidden in the darkness a sensual co-efficient of the mental passion which was welding our souls and spirits in one flaming effort."

But in India homosexuality is never a refinement. It is indulged in with no finesse. It is only practised by the most lurid type of men, and even they are usually bi-sexual. It is only because of repression that they resort to it, as a substitute for the real thing which is denied to them. But in England homo-sexuality is regarded by highbrows as only a variation of the normal. Some of the most well-known people in English social life are known to be confirmed homosexuals, and though the law in England is the same as it is in India, no one hears it mentioned very much in the courts where every day poor people are being charged and convicted of petty larceny—for stealing a loaf of bread to appease a hungry stomach.

If homosexuality among men is rare in India, lesbianism is quite unknown, or if it exists, it is almost negligible. Eton-cropped women in tailor-made suits, who affect masculinity to a degree that is nauseating, are essentially a Western acquisition. You may call it an intellectual pose. You may call it individuality carried to excess. You may treat it as a gesture to establish the equality of the sexes,

but it needs a lot of explaining away. There is no counterpart of it in the India where women are women and there is no doubt about it.

The so-called vices of the Indian woman are limited to hetero-sexual intercourse. Maybe a time will come we too will have completed the circle of Barbarism, Civilisation and Decadence. At the moment we are still struggling with the stage of civilisation.

So it is also with the other more perverted forms of sex inhibitions. When I first heard the word "masochism" it meant little to me. I thought it was an archaic word for some archaic practice of the Greeks or the Romans, to whom we in India are inclined to attribute all practices which do not exist amongst us. But that sadists and masochists existed in the age we lived in and that I would meet them in normal life was, I had thought, impossible in this civilised world. But it seems that civilisation itself has brought to life these very same people, and that those who had been through the last great war had seen so much pain and suffering that they had begun to enjoy this emotion—passively in the case of the masochists and actively as with sadists. The characters which the Marquis de Sade created, and from which sadism takes its name, and those which Sacher Masoch, the Russian, brought into his creative fiction are sometimes to be found walking by you in the streets of the capitals of Europe, or

sitting beside you in the bus or the Underground, ostensibly ordinary people, whom you would hardly notice.

One evening, at a certain café in London, I ran into a friend of mine who dabbles in sculpture. He was alone and I joined him. He told me he was waiting for one of his models. I expected a very beautiful, exotic young woman and asked whether he minded if I sat at his table. He told me I was very welcome but it was not a woman he was waiting for but a very ordinary middle-aged man.

" A model ? " I asked " what for ? "

" I am doing a bust of him. He has commissioned it."

" Rich or important ? "

" Neither."

" What does he do ? "

"He is in a bank. That's all."

" A financier ? "

" No just an ordinary official at one of the banks. Not quite a clerk I suppose but nothing to speak of."

" Extraordinary ! "

" It is. If you wait long enough you may find material for a story."

I did. Impatiently I looked at the main door from which various people entered but none so interesting as to be an artist's model. One of these very unimportant-looking persons came and sat at

our table. We were introduced. His name was quite ordinary. His looks his clothes his manner showed nothing which, but for my friend's remarks about him would have made me notice him anywhere. He sat down and made very casual observances on ordinary topics of conversation. He was not very talkative and preferred to sip the cognac he had ordered. I noticed my friend watching the expression on the model's face at which the model showed signs of being self-conscious and fingered his chin because he was nervous. When I watched him with greater care I noticed a peculiar gleam in his eye and a sneer on his face. It was a sort of self-defence, his retort to the world. His lower lip was rather more prominent and now and again he looked down and grazed his tongue over it. But that was all.

He did not stay very long. He seemed in a hurry to leave. He excused himself on the ground that he had to get to work early. "Slaves of a system," he said, with a cynical expression on his face, and smiled. When he had gone, I turned to a my friend and asked him to explain the mystery. " No mystery," he replied," "a very ordinary specimen of a sadist, without any refinement whatsoever. Didn't you hear him say 'slaves of a system' ? "

" Sadist ? " I said, unbelievingly, "no, it's not possible,"

But it was, and what made it more incredible

were the circumstances about his life which were so ordinary. The only thing that was strange about him was his dislike for people, but that was nothing unusual for a great many people are shy and detest crowded places. But the perversion in the case of this man went deeper. It was to be found in the reason of his having a bust of himself. For he wanted a permanent record of himself as he himself knew he was and as the world did not. So that when he was dead his ordinary self would die and the bust would preserve the sadist. He had come to the café that evening to show my friend the look on his face after he had vented his perversity on one of his victims. That was the expression which the sculptor had to catch and to put into that likeness of him. I shuddered when I heard this, and for a long while that look on his face haunted me. For it was something that I would never find in my own country, something I could never quite understand. Maybe it is because we are not very sophisticated in our civilisation, and our conception of love, sex and morals is almost childish when compared with the West.

XI

FAITH

NO ONE CAN PASS THROUGH INDIA WITHOUT BEING conscious of its deep, mystic religious fervour. Sometimes when I hear the lone echo of a poor labourer kneeling on the sand and uttering his evening prayer as the sun goes down, I wonder whether any economic emancipation can bring to him the satisfaction which he gets from this loud protestation of his faith and of his God—this complete surrender of his soul when the day's work is done and when the last rays of the sun dip into the far-off horizon to give birth to that twilight which has been called *l'heure bleu.*

I have seen that moving sight more than once from my window in the Custom House in that desert of Sind. That vast expanse of sand used to form the grey canvas on which this picture was painted, and as the camel carts retired for the day, the silence hung heavy on that emptiness that lay bare before me. The keeper of the gates would then lock the entrance to the sheds, while the specks of sand which had been blown about by the traffic of cars would settle down and the ground

would even up and the hoof-marks of the beasts and the tracks made by the wheels would be covered up, and the drab grey of the twilight would help to make the deception complete. Then the old man at the gates would kneel down on his little strip of cloth and offer his little prayer. So he had done all the envenings of his life at that same twilight hour, and life seemed incomplete without this daily offering to his God for the peace that he felt within himself. I shall never forget that sight, simple as it was, yet in its setting so typical of the East, of India and of that part of the Orient which has still remained untouched by the influx of modern ideas, which have crept into our midst by way of travellers from the West.

It makes me sceptical of any revolution in India which would be based on a reorganisation of the economic order of Society and which would disregard, as every economic revolution has, the inexplicable force and stimulus of religion, of simple faith, and of superstitions which form the basis of their religions.

I read Nehru on Religion. It was the point of view of an intellect that had been nursed in the best school of economic thought. In his autobiography he says: " It (religion) offers, as Islam and popular Hinduism offer, a safe anchorage from doubt and mental conflict, an assurance of a future life which will make up for the deficiencies of this life." But

the idea of a safe anchorage does not attract this apostle of Lenin and Marx. He prefers the open sea with all its storms and tempests. He finds the problems of life sufficiently absorbing not to want to discover what happens after death.

Nehru's view of religion in India is shared by a great many young men who find the religious outlook a constant hindrance to progress, and the superstitions of which have been the cause of the maintenance of that high standard of illiteracy to the mast of which we are for ever moored. From that point of view, religion appears to be the arch-enemy of India's future, dogging its footsteps at every stage of its struggle for freedom. Then it becomes narrow and intolerant—one other aspect of orthodoxy, which we of this generation have to fight to the bitter end if we want to see our ideals realised within our lifetime.

I have often felt the urge to discard the sacred garments which I wear as a mark of my religion. Were it not that it would hurt my people, I would not be wearing them now. It seems somewhat pointless to be mumbling words in the Avesta language which I have learnt by heart, and repeating them solemnly twice a day when I do not understand a word of what I am saying. The prayers of my religion are not in the language we talk, but in the obsolete Avesta and Pehelavi, which is really the province of the scholar. It is as if the service

at the village church was conducted in Greek by the village parson who had the Greek phonetically written for him.

Against all this I rebel, as against the various occasions on which we are made to troop down to the Fire Temple in large herds on festival days, wearing brand new clothes, and exhibiting our prosperity in the temple of God. There is something revolting in this form of exhibitionism in which my community periodically indulges.

I remember being bathed in milk, anointed in rose water, put into a new suit, and hustled into a car and driven down to the Fire Temple on our New Year's Day. By some freak manœuvring of the Parsee Calendar, the New Year's Day always fell on the last day of the Parsee year. It was called *Navroj* or the new day. And the day after, which we all celebrate, was the *Pateti*—the day of repentance. So we begin the year with repentance. Strange irony that we should anticipate ourselves year in and year out, and anticipate correctly. But so it has gone on ever since I can remember, and we need little excuse to celebrate. As a child I used to get a little present on the Hindoo New Year, than calmly hang up my stocking at Christmas, collect a present for our own New Year, and wonder what was coming to us on the first of January. That was about the only religion we understood. That is about all we still understand.

At the age of eight or nine, a ceremony is performed when we are accepted into the religion. It is a sort of late baptism. It is known as the *navjote* ceremony, when the *sudra*, which is the sacred vest, and the *kusti*, which is the thread, are given to us, tied round for the first time by the priest in the presence of several hundreds of guests who have come solely to be sociable and to dine at our parents' expense. In return they give presents which are accepted with thanks, till someone from their family has a similar ceremony when we return an equally expensive gift. It all seems so utterly futile, though the sight of all those pairs and pairs of cuff-links used to make me wonder whether life was going to be so very exciting that we should be able to change our links with every shirt we pulled out of the laundry.

I remember my *navjote* very well. The ceremony itself was quite tedious and somewhat tiresome. First there was the excitement of it, shooting round from place to place to be measured for clothes, for the cap and little details which were essential for the religious ceremony. On the day itself, some time in the afternoon, I was bathed, while a priest came into the bathroom and saw that I emerged pure. We have to drink the urine of the cow in the process of cleansing the body. No doubt it is medicated, but for all intents and purposes it is still the urine of a cow, and I know the sensation I

caused when I refused to drink it. There was quite a little argument, and eventually the priest said he would turn round and I should tell him that I had drunk it, and that would absolve him of the responsibility and appease his professional conscience. So I suppose I entered my religion on false pretences. If I am ever to marry a Parsee girl, I shall have to face that same embarrassment again, as it seems to be necessary that you should be purified in the same way before being pronounced man and wife.

It is the authoritative opinion on this point that although the liquid is what it is, the element of purity enters into it after the saying of certain prayers. It would be calamitous therefore if a priest got slack and skipped the essential words or if in the process of purification the various bowls got mixed up, and the element of purity did not reach the particular sample in question. From this I come to the conclusion, that either we have gone beyond the scope of science, or that in our scientific belief we are grossly behind time, confusing hygiene with faith, and science with superstition.

What I write now is of my own religion, and the customs which are peculiar to us have no application to the various other religions of India. But religion as a whole seems to have degenerated into empty ceremonial, and in the age in which we live the survival of these ceremonials which have outlived

their original purpose is dangerous for the future of our country. So religion becomes the basis of much conflict, the cause of communal trouble, and the consequennt maintenance of Imperialism in our midst. To the theory of "Divide and Rule" the the existence of this element of perpetual conflict provides the stimulus, and the British tradition continues because our people are too busy safeguarding petty religious prejudices and attaching too much importance to the things which have been the cause of our stagnation. Then it becomes as Nehru puts it " the enemy of clear thought, for it is based not only on the acceptance without demur of certain fixed and unalterable theories and dogmas, but also on sentiment and emotion and passion...It deliberately or unconsciously shuts its eyes to reality lest reality may not fit in with preconceived notions. It is narrow and intolerant of other opinions and ideas ; it is self-centred and egotistic, it often allows itself to be exploited by self-seekers and opportunists."

It is with this aspect of India's attitude to religion that we of the younger generation want to have little to do. The result is that orthodox relilious opinion dubs us as atheists, as a disbelieving generation that marks the decline of the species, as amoral when not immoral, as ungrateful to God, man, and our fathers. There is no limit to the charges that are levelled against us once our lack of faith in the orthodox beliefs is established. But

it is not that we are immoral or amoral, but that the standards of morality have changed. It is not that we are atheists but that our conception of religion does not quite fit in with that of our fathers, and that we are not prepared to accept the orthodox interpretation of religion and to respect the shibboleths and dogmas which have degenerated into mere ceremonial. And the idea that the millions of our countrymen are exploited by an unscrupulous clergy, which exists as a profession solely for profit, masking themselves as saviours of the soul and guides to the after-life, is repugnant to us. So we would rather see religion wiped off the face of India than that it should be practised in the way in which it is.

Yet there are aspects of religion in India which would make India the poorer for its disappearance. Perhaps in India's struggle for existence it is the one thing that has made that poor down-trodden country hold up its head, when the brutality of *lathi* charges had almost broken the morale of its people. Then religion has become the opium of its people, putting to sleep tired efforts and broken limbs, till refreshed they are able to arise again and continue the struggle for existence, the struggle for freedom, the struggle for self-respect.

At such stages of the national struggle the element of conflict and of antagonism between rival religions seems to disappear. Muslim does not feel antipathy

to the Hindoo, and each begins to want to respect the feelings of the other. The various religions of India seem to merge into the all-embracing creed of nationalism. It is a strange paradox that these great rivalries should be fused into one powerful and united force, when the future of the country is at stake, and that those who only a few days ago were smashing heads with bamboo sticks, should be found to walk side by side following the flag of green, white and saffron and shouting with enthusiasm "Bande Matram."

When I think now of my mother waking up so early as five in the morning to go to the Fire Temple during the days of the *muktad*, when the spirits of the dead are supposed to revisit the earth. I begin to feel the depth of her faith, and the simplicity of that prayer, uttered by a lone priest in that vast room in one corner of the Fire Temple. I realise then the intensity and the power of religion not only over her, but through her over myself. As I watch her I see what satisfaction it gives her to have paid her respect to the dead, and what it means to have that feeling of a solemn duty discharged which is incomparable—a duty to her God and to herself. She will return tired and exhausted while I am still drinking my morning coffee and glancing over the day's news in the papers, wondering what the future of Europe has in store for us, and whether a certain piece of political news has any far reaching signi-

ficance. I see the difference between us, the two worlds to which we belong, the difference of ideals, the conflict of purpose, the gulf between religion and the reality of the material world. Her body is tired, but in her inner-self there is a peace that is beyond understanding, a peace that I have not yet had a craving for, an unselfishness which I cannot claim, nor feel. My world in comparison seems to be centred round the self, around whatever may be uppermost in my mind. My religion may take shape in politics, in writing, even in the idealisation of a woman. To me these things are the food of my soul, and in my reaction to them is the key to my morality.

I feel the difference of outlook between my generation and hers. I respect her attitude. I have no doubt as to her sincerity. Yet I feel it would be a mockery on my part if I was to emulate her in her way of prayer and her interpretation of religion. This is perhaps the most fundamental difference between the two generations to which we belong. It is perhaps the dividing line which mark the birth of modern India.

I noticed for the first time when I went up to Oxford, that at the Majlis, where we met every Sunday ostensibly to debate on futile issues, but really only to chat over a cup of coffee and to keep in touch with our fellow-countrymen, there were no visible signs of caste distinctions, nor were we

divided into communities. Religious differences were non-existent, and we were hardly conscious of any other fact than that we were Indians. Perhaps even that is not true, for there were Singalese, Burmese and Chinese visitors who fitted into us as if they were also Indians. Only the presence of the white man in our midst was noticeable, so that colour was the deciding factor. That was the outlook of the generation which was up at Oxford at that time. It made me realise then that religion was not going to stand in the way of the younger generation and that in the India of to-morrow it would not be the vital issue which it is to-day.

It is one of the proud boasts of the British that they have preserved the various religions of India, and allowed them to remain untouched by iconoclasts. This may be a good thing, but in preserving religion, they have also preserved religious prejudices which would have long disappeared in a self-governing India, and without which my country would be much happier. When any legislation is proposed which directly or indirectly affects any aspect of an orthodox religion, the Government of India has always been very reluctant to support such legislation. On the contrary, they are eager to side with die-hards who want no changes and to whom the *status quo* is a sort of obsession. So at the time of the Child Marriage Bill, the chief obs-

tacle in the way of reform came from the Government itself, which on such occasions acts as custodian of Indian orthodox opinion. In return for this, the Government gets the support of those bogus statesmen who get themselves elected to the legislatures on tickets of special representations. As they have to attach themselves to some creed, political or otherwise, they become the self-appointed guardians of orthodox religion—and the paraphernalia that goes with it—against the onslaught of iconoclasts, who are alleged to be in secret league with Soviet Russia, and paid by the Reds to stir up trouble in that otherwise peaceful continent of India. Peaceful, yes—all except for the occasional rioting.

To prove the authority from which they derive their power, these staunch defenders of faith get the support of those hundreds of priests with whom the religions of India are infested, and whose unscrupulous morals are not worth boasting about. I know of a Parsee priest who in between his appointed duties went round to the little betel-nut shop around the corner to place the day's bet on the forecasts of the American market, which is the worst and commonest form of gambling, besides being the most ruinous and forbidden by law. What a different expression there was on his face when he turned up at the beginning of each month, clad in his priestly attire to present the account for prayers

for the month. I do not say that there is no one from that profession who can call himself a priest in the real sense of the word. I refer to the majority of them, whom I regard as unfit for the office they hold. It is a sad thought that these uncultured, ignorant specimens of our race should be found in such large numbers among the clergy. It is a gross, though a true, reflection on the state of religion in my country.

I begin to realise the significance of the vision in Nehru's mind. I realise, too, that his way alone is the way of our salvation, for the problems of India grow in confusion the more they are discussed on any religious basis. Only on the platform of economics can they be satisfactorily thrashed out.

Yet what of the millions ? What about the old gate-keeper at the Custom House sheds at Karachi ? What about the others like him ? Are they to be denied the only satisfaction they can get out of life, born as they are into this world a servient people, slaves of illiteracy, slaves of poverty and of disease, slaves also of the Empire of which they are subjects? What about them ? Will they ever be able to realise that a higher standard of living, unemployment benefits, health insurance are worth more than the promises of priests for a safe Passage to Heaven on Judgment Day? They are at best only mediocre people. And mediocrity is, after all, what religions cater for.

I remember expressing that sentiment to Frank

Buchman, the champion of that strip-tease attitude to Christianity, popularly known as the Oxford Group Movement. It was a good slogan—Oxford Group Movement! The "Oxford" gave it class and refinement. The "Group" showed the herd mentality, and the "Movement" was symbolic of their hope to get somewhere. It had its safeguards, in case, as it frequently happened, it failed to be quite Oxford, or it failed to move. Then it was attributed to lack of guidance, a sort of lull in evolution, a break-down of the species, or as the familiar voice over the telephone says, "Line temporarily out of order." I had met Buchman on the eve of a gigantic religious garden party, and on being introduced to him on the platform at Oxford Station, he directed that I should be given a ticket of admission. On the day of the meeting I chanced to run into him again and my ticket of admission was supplemented by a ticket to sit on the raised platform with the high and the mighty, and I was grateful for the promotion. It was an interesting experiment in mass psychology, and the topicality of it had drawn me there. For me the Oxford Group Movement was in the news, and I could not bear the idea that those around me should be talking about something about which I knew nothing. The individual confessions of the "sinners" did not impress me, but I liked the community singing, and the impromptu conversion of

Lady Margaret Hall, which was always an eyesore in Oxford, into an open-air church with a choir of many hundreds of ill-trained voices, straining their gutturals to get melodious sounds from out of their unmusical systems. I liked a reference Buchman made to the idea that we who bow to our King, our Dictator, our Republics, should not hesitate to bow to the King of kings. It created a melodramatic effect, which even I found quite entertaining. It appealed to the sense of melodrama in me. It appealed to the sentimental in me, and true to my upbringing I reacted instantly to it. He had certainly made a point. But when it was all over, the same Frank Buchman, a citizen of the United States, or was it Canada? addressing an audience which I was given to understand was composed of men and women from all parts of the world, led the chorus of "God Save The King." It may have been a gesture of goodwill to the people of the country in which this meeting was held, but it was more the sort of thing I had expected from members of the Indian Round Table Conference, in return for all receptions given in their honour in this country; but was the temple of God the right place for singing the National Anthem? It was as if the King of kings had after all taken second place to the King of England, and that religion was only secondary to nationality and politics. When Buchman asked me what I thought of it all, I told him

that he had spoilt a good play with a hopeless last curtain. He stood there and fingered his chin. I wondered whether he was listening. Suddenly, his eyes lifted from the ground to which they had been glued. He looked at me, agreed that it was a contradiction in view of what he had said about bowing to the King of kings, and added: "For your sins I'll punish you by making you sit opposite me at table." So another card arrived from one of his numerous followers. I certainly had moved fast. First the admission card, then the card to the raised platform, then the card to the high table. I was quite sure that of that select gathering at his table, I was the least important, or perhaps the most unimportant, but I certainly was the most deserving. I had made the only constructive point that evening, and the others round me were there merely because of their standing or their reputation.

At a large oblong table we sat, Buchman taking the head at the centre, and I had a seat directly opposite him. I was quite impressed with the surroundings, having Beverley Nichols on my left and an English peer somewhere across the table. But it made me forget all about the Groups, all about the religion which they proposed to resurrect from the past, and to serve up in cellophane after being carefully polished by the staunch workers at Buchman's side. I was interested in Beverley

Nichols, because he had written best-sellers, and had given me a couple of paras in his "Page Two" of the *Sunday Chronicle*. And I was interested in the noble lord, because of his unsympathetic utterances on the Indian questions in the House of Lords, at which he was hereditarily privileged to be heard and I was not. So religion faded out of the picture at the sight of him, and that national complex, which religion had striven to obliterate, came up more strongly than ever. I could not see myself confessing my innermost thoughts to the noble lord, nor could I see him emptying his heart out to me. And if we had, no good could have come out of it. I knew then that all these codes of religion, whether they were the primitive methods of India or the more sophisticated and modern methods of the West, were not for us. Religion so understood and so practised, was only for those who had little to confess, who never experienced great loves or great hatreds, whose lives were comparatively eventless, and whose mediocre existence made them find an easy refuge in the harbour of religion. But for us it will have to be the open sea with all its storms and tempests. A great many young men of my generation who had dropped anchor in safe harbours are now "standing-to", crying Ay-Ay to the skipper's order of full-speed ahead. There are to be no more ports of call on the next voyage—not so long as Nehru skippers the ship.

All the ship's flags he has had pulled down. Only the flag of the Congress flies half-mast as a mark of respect to the religions that have sunk in the storm.

XII

POVERTY AND PREJUDICE

YOU HAVE SEEN IN ENGLAND A QUEUE OF UNEMPLOYED men outside the Labour Exchange in the forlorn hope of a job. You have seen poor families broken up because of the rigidity of an inhuman Means Test. You have seen the conditions under which men live in the distressed areas of the North and your hearts have bled for the sufferings of these people. But the condition of the Indian masses at the best of times is more pitiable than that. They are half-naked, half-starved, half-dead—their bodies sweating in the heat of the tropical sun.

Often when travelling on long journeys I have looked out of the window of my compartment at the scenery that tears past me. Miles and miles of lowland, sometimes mountains, sometimes fields with crops, sometimes just parched areas which have been burnt out for want of rain. They seem so empty, uninhabited except for a few naked children with protruding abdomens, their heads shaved but for a tuft at the top. It makes me wonder where those three hundred and fifty million people are really to be found. Is the population

of India a myth or do these millions really exist?

In our mad rush from one westernised town to another we hardly have time to look for the masses. These wide open spaces through which the train passes are speckled with a few black dots. From the fleeting glance you get of them, they seem to be mere phantoms like scarecrows that have been placed there to frighten away the birds. Their bodies are like dark shadows across the face of India. Nobody ever hears them speak, nor have they any message to convey. They seem resigned to their mode of living. To them life is just one long sigh after another. Yet they sigh for nothing. They want nothing because they do not know what to want. They have never seen the lights of the great cities, never ventured further than their plot of ground.

Somewhere there is another world, they know. Somewhere there are other people. But do they really exist, or is it just another superstition? As they look around them, they see barefooted men and women and children-with-protruding-abdomens unashamed of their nakedness, unconscious of their sex, their little bodies shining with sweat.

In the village there are little shops which sell grain and groceries, and others which sell clothes, and there is a village *patel* whom they respect, and now and again a car passes by, and now another. Streamlined limousines mean nothing to them and

they are afraid of the rattle of the engines. Sometimes too a white face appears in their midst. They know he is different. They know that he is superior to them and that they must bow to him when he passes. He is their little white God. They believe that the world really belongs to him who is white, though they have never ventured to ask the reason why. He comes from a different part of the world, they are told, by those amongst them who can read and write. He comes from far far away, but how far they cannot imagine. Their world is limited to the horizon beyond which they cannot see and the clouds which come and go and the sun which shines.

But is it like that all over the world ? Do they know that in Europe nations are spending thousands of millions of pounds on rearmament and social services and health insurance and unemployment relief ? Do they know that there is such a conception as a state, that there are democracies, dictatorships, monarchies and republics ? Do they ?

Can they ever imagine that somehwere there are clean, broad avenues ? That little white girls walk up and down Piccadilly and that anyone can have them for a pound ? And how much is a pound ? How many bags of rice does that stand for ? And is it worth the exchange ? Can they ever visualise houses that are different from their cow-dung huts—that sky-scrapers exist and that you can go to the

top of them in elevators ? Do they realise that somewhere men wash in warm water which flows from bright shining taps into pale green baths, and that they step out on bathmats and wipe their bodies with Turkish towels ? Do they know that there is music different from the singing of birds and the strange noises that come out of the pipes of the village band—from little bamboo sticks that have had holes pierced into them to produce notes that ring in their unwashed ears ? Do they ever smell anything like the subtle perfumes of Guerlain and Molyneux when they sniff the incense that burns in their temples ? Do they ever smell anything except the odour of their own bodies ? I wonder. Their life is just full of barefooted men, who pass them on Mondays and again on Tuesdays and on every day of the week. Even time has ceased to have any meaning except that when the sun shines it is time for work and when the night approaches they rest their tired limbs on the ground, till the first rays of the sun wake them up in the morning.

When I see people in England getting indignant about the dole benefit, and the "meagre" fifteen shillings which the State gives them, I think of these hundreds of thousands of Indian people who after working eight and ten hours a day earn that much in a month and are happy if they do. It has been said that you cannot make this comparison when the standard of living in these two countries is so

very different. Maybe, but correspondingly the condition of poverty is much worse and it shows that somewhere there are people who have more cause to complain, but never do anything more than sigh. We never realise what poverty means, and yet when I look upon these uncomplaining people who day in and day out do the same hours of sweated labour, I wonder whether they know what it means to be poor, for they have never been known to be anything else.

I remember years ago—not so long really, for I am twenty-six now—at Mahableshwar on the Western Ghauts, which is a sort of summer resort of the Upper Four Hundred, we had bought baskets and baskets of strawberries and several hives of bees which were to be rinsed out for fresh honey. My father pulled out a five-rupee note and gave it to the three villagers who had sold all this to us. Five rupees is roughly seven and six, and notes had been in existence for quite a number of years, but the villagers laughed and we wondered what the joke was about. They did not believe that it stood for money. Their motto was like that of the Americans, "In God we trust" and all others must pay cash. And by cash they meant silver, for that was the only money they ever understood. They knew what silver could buy. They wore ornaments of silver. They knew it had value. To them it stood for so many bags of rice, food, clothing. No promis-

sory notes even if they came from the Government of India or the Bank of England could mean the same. It struck me then that India must be a poor country that even the five-rupee note had not travelled so far.

When I compare this with the presumption current in this country that every Indian is a Maharajah, or at least is well-to-do, I wonder what causes that impression. It is true that the moment you speak of an Indian, the picture that comes up before the mind of the man-on-the-Clapham-bus is that of the Aga Khan with his rich stud of horses, his Derby winners, his suite at the Ritz, his morning dress, his field-glasses, his princely titles. But is that the picture of the average Indian ? Is that even representative of the Indian who comes to England and spends the greater part of his English days in the Students' Union in Gower Street ? I often wonder why we give this rich impression. But when so much publicity is given in this country to the Aga Khan being weighed in gold by his followers and the money equivalent to that weight of gold donated to him as an offering and later given by him to charity, it does convey rather a picturesque impression of the India from which the story comes. Where could all that money come from if not from a rich India ? We might just as well ask where do all those Rolls-Royces come from which hang outside the Grosvenor and the Dor-

chester when some big "do" is going on inside? Perhaps I should not use the word "do" for such "refained" functions. The Rolls-Royces give no idea of the poverty of England, as the gold in the balance gives little idea of the poverty of my country.

The Derby of 1935, which the Aga Khan won with Bahram, was referred to as an "Indian' victory. It struck me then as rather odd that it should be called that way. We were three of us, living at that time in the same house in Gloucester Place, and like all others trying to spot the Derby winner if only to have a little celebration of our own. For days we had followed the gallops, the tips, the prices. We had looked up the form, the pedigree of every single candidate in the field. We had consulted the oracles and got conflicting answers. On the day before the race, at the famous Press lunch, the Aga Khan was reported to have said: "If wet—Hairan; if fine—Bahram." We watched the weather, studied the forecasts of the B.B.C. There seemed very little doubt about the weather, for the skies were grey and rain had fallen consistently for hours. "If wet—Hairan." So it had to be. Soon after lunch on Derby Day we waited breathlessly for the commentary—that half-hour of agony which is the B.B.C.'s idea of making the Derby interesting. The false start, then back again, now, no, yes—they're off! Ears keenly

following the commentary, the horses turning Tattenham Corner, the forecasts, the surprises, the result, the judge's decision. Then the silence and good-bye to all our plans. That night we dined at home. All three of us. Fifty *Players* kept us company, vanishing fast as the hours rolled on—hours of silence. It was a grim picture—that of three young men smoking, watching the rings of smoke they blew into the still air. Our sense of humour made us send a telegram of congratulations to the Aga Khan. It was addressed to him at the Ritz in London, and ran: " Best congratulations but put last Sulka shirt on Hairan kindly replace very wet." It was signed by all three and I wonder what the great sportsman thought of our crazy idea.

Even so, did the loss of a couple of pounds entitle us or anyone else to call it an "Indian" loss ? That is how I felt, when I heard about the "Indian" victory, for of what benefit was it to the three hundred odd millions of India ? Did they even know that the Aga Khan had won the Derby ? And for that matter what was the Derby and who was the Aga Khan ? What does he stand for and how many bags of rice did he represent ? There is little doubt in my mind that the Aga Khan is better known in England than he is in India taken as a whole.

I do not say this in any derogatory sense, but I think I am right in saying that the name of the Aga

Khan means nothing to the Indian masses. There he is merely the head of a small Khoja community—the spiritual head of a sect of people with no territorial jurisdiction. It is true that his ancestry can be traced to the Benefatimate Caliph of Egypt and through Ismail, the seventh Imam, to Fatima, the only daughter of the Prophet Mohammed, but what did all this mean to the millions that constituted the population of India ?

The Aga Khan has always intrigued me, for it strikes me as paradoxical that a man who in his outlook on life has revealed a mind which is essentially Western, should in these times of highly strung nationalism be called upon to lead and represent the peoples of India. He led the delegation at the Round Table Conference and on several other occasions he has been India's representative No. 1. Why did he set the tune for the people of India, when the millions that are the people of India did not even know of his existence ?

Nehru had made a smashing attack on the Aga Khan in his book. In his chapter on the Round Table Conference, he says : " It was fitting that in this assembly of vested interests—imperialist, feudal, financial, industrial, religious, communal—the leadership of the British Indian delegation should usually fall to the Aga Khan, who in his own person happened to combine all these interests in some degree. Closely associated as he has been with

British Imperialism and the British ruling class for over a generation, residing chiefly in England, he could thoroughly appreciate and represent our rulers' interests and view-point. He would have been an able representative of Imperialist England at that Round Table Conference. The irony of it was that he was supposed to represent India."

Prompted chiefly by curiosity and fascinated as I have always been by the Aga Khan's personality, I wrote to him fairly recently and asked whether the idea of my writing his biography would appeal to him. I had had this on my mind for a long time, for I have felt that a biography of the Aga Khan should be written by one who like him was Indian by birth, and like him also was a Westerner in outlook. No Englishman, however brilliant, should be given this job, and I felt that the Aga Khan was far too busy a person ever to settle down to write his memoirs. Besides, and I must confess this thought did also cross my mind, to get the chance was for a young man of my years a break which one gets only once in a lifetime. But my luck did not break even, though the Aga Khan was most courteous in his reply. He put it modestly when he said that his life's work was not yet completed.

His answer made me think quite a lot. It was certainly a most excellent thing for a man in his position to say. It showed that he himself did not think that he had done everything that was in his

power to do. But what was it he was aiming at? I wondered then whether in the autumn of his life he was making a last moment bid to associate himself with the masses of India. Was he intending to renounce all princely and earthly power and wealth and make his last great effort for the poor hungry millions? And I knew for certain that the people of India would rejoice if he did so, for they need a man of his ability and his world-wide connections much more than do the Turf clubs of England. That would be a real Indian victory—much more Indian than the victory of Bahram was. Time will reveal what was really on his mind, for I refuse to believe that his more recent election as President of the Assembly of the League of Nations and the throwing of a party that was reported to have cost five thousand pounds could possibly have been contemplated by him as the completion of a life's work.

The inclusion of the Aga Khan in a chapter on Poverty may seem somewhat out of place. But it is not so far fetched when you bear in mind the numerous occasions on which he has spoken as the authoritative spokesman of the people of India, and India is on the whole a very poor country. And it is even more justified when you bear in mind that a great percentage of people in this country believe that we are all like the Aga Khan, exceedingly rich, and that we have palaces in India even as the Joneses and the Smiths have their little suburban

cottage on the hire-purchase system.

I have often complained of being broke and the few days preceding the next allowance have seemed very dreadful. These hard days are the spice of a student's life. Sometimes we have had a bit too much of this spice. I have gone to one particularly kind friend in these days of distress. The counterfoils of my old cheque-books can pay tribute to his name. Pay J. H——or order, they all said, though my Bank Manager nor anyone else ever knew the reason why. J.H—— often wondered why he did it, cashing a post-dated cheque for me to tide me over a few days. He was no money-lender and all he got was the trouble of waiting for a week or ten days and then putting into his account the money that was all the time his. But no Indian student who has come to England can do without post-dating his cheques sometimes. But was that poverty? Could any of us who have seen the condition of the poor in India say that we were poor?

At the time of the Coronation, several Indian Maharajahs came to England. The registers of luxury hotels were full of them. What did they do? What have some of them ever done? It broke my heart when I heard that one of them had paid twenty-five pounds for a seat so that his servant, who did not get that much pay in six

months, could get a glimpse of the King. Money means nothing to these Indian Princes who come to Europe. Their European budgets often include items such as: "To English Secretary........ Pounds 500."

"To Mr. X—— to prevent scandal of being cited as co-respondent....Pounds Two Thousand." I am afraid this form of blackmail is being a little overdone. As someone said of outraged virgins: "They would only lose half their heads, and carefully keep the other half to play the outraged woman with." But for every one case that is exposed, half a dozen are amicably settled. All that is necessary are a few adjustments in the budget and what are Ministers for if not to look after these trifling details of expenditure?

So it goes on, while the people of the States continue to live on the borderline of life and death. And now after all these years they brought in legislation to protect the Princes. It is known as the Princes' Protection Act. It speaks for itself.

What I say about the Princes does not apply to all. There are some very notable exceptions, for I believe that the States of Mysore and Baroda are beyond reproach, having at their helm the most excellent rulers. But how many others are there like the Maharajah of Mysore and the Gaekwar of Baroda, who have made the welfare of the people their first concern? How many are there who are

half as cultured as these two orthodox old men? How many command the respect of their subjects as they do? These two and a few other Indian States are the few exceptions to the rule, and it seems a pity that in the future constitution of India provision has been made to safeguard these other crumbling petty monarchies, which have done us no good. Some of these puppet rulers exist only under the shadow of the British Raj, and they will continue so long as the British are there to give them that protection.

I have had occasion to watch from a distance and study the life which some of these young rulers lead. Their petty Highnesses are never awake or available before lunch, after which they sit down to a game of cards, surrounded by those who regard themselves as the members of the Court Circle. Sometime later in the afternoon the so-called Ministers arrive with a few papers for their petty Highnesses' consideration, which is a little formality in the routine of the day. So the evening comes and with it more food and more cards. Later still comes the chant of the singing girl to lull them to sleep or to awaken them to feel the urge of life—an urge which dies down the morning after.

When speaking of the poverty of India, we must not overlook to mention those who have helped to make it a permanent feature of that country. For those petty kingdoms are the worst form of vested

interests that exist, and in their struggle for existence these puppet kingdoms have sponged on the people over which their rule extends in order to drain every ounce of energy that there may be in the people.

No wonder then that at the Round Table Conferences the Princes were not too anxious to join the Federation and to allow themselves to be reviewed by the representatives of the people of India. The British regime has been their only salvation and they would rather that their abdication orders were signed by the Governor-General than by the Ministers who have been elected by the people of India. So it is that when the Viceroy is visiting an Indian State, no expense is spared to give the impression that the finances of the State are in perfect order, even though the entertainment may cripple the resources of the State. If the Viceroy is fond of *shikar* then *shikar* is provided for him, no matter what it costs and from where the prey is to be fetched. You don't seriously believe that those who on their retirement plaster their walls and cover their floors with beautiful skins, have really gone in to the jungle and watched for days and waited for their prey? They have never given the animal a chance. They have shot it with its back to the wall, like catching mice in a trap and then dipping them in hot water while still in the trap. So too *shikar* is done in India between

lunch and tea, a sort of excursion into His Highness's back-garden, which has been ruffled quite a bit to make the setting a little realistic. And God help those in charge if the animal does not arrive on the spot at the appointed time.

The dumb millions watch all this happen. They never question the right of those who are their rulers, whether it is an Indian Prince or a British Government. The Indian will religiously follow anyone who is in power, and the *status quo* carries with it a sanctity all its own.

We must bear this characteristic in mind in order to appreciate the effort of the Congress to establish mass contacts and to form organisations all over the country in order to instil in these dumb millions that fighting spirit which is essential if they want to find their way out of poverty, out of the maze of illiteracy in which they have wasted so many hundred years. The Congress plan aims at defeating the power of all vested interests whether it takes the shape of a ruling Prince or a group of industrial magnates, for with the coming of Nehru the efforts to shatter the force of Imperialism, to settle the communal problem, to raise the standard of education, to establish social services, to ameliorate poverty, and all other such efforts to make the people of India into a strong healthy independent nation must all be subservient to the one main effort to reorganise Society on an essentially econo-

mic basis. That was the answer of the Congress to all the problems of India. It was the one sensible answer to the problem of an essentially poor nation.

Akin to poverty is the problem of the Untouchable, which this religious worship of the *status quo* makes it difficult to remove. Untouchability is the emanation of the caste system, which is originally based on the sort of work which those who were branded by caste did. Caste is only peculiar to the Hindoos, but as they constitute the majority of the population of India, caste has been associated with India as a whole.

At the head of this hierarchy, of caste is the *Brahmin.* He was the sole interpreter of religion to the people. Like the clergy in the England of the Reformation, it was an influential and cultured class. Later it began to crystallise itself into a community which within the larger Hindoo community wielded a great influence, and claimed the right to do so from father to son.

So Hindooism began to bisect itself into fragments. There sprung up the warrior class, known as the *Rajputs;* the *Bania*, who was the man of commerce or the money-lender; the *Chamar*, whose trade was to make shoes; and the *Dhér* or the sweeper, who by virtue of the dirty work he did, began to be regarded as the untouchable. Sanitation was quite un-

known and it fell to the lot of a sect of Hindoos to clean the city, whether it was the slush and dirt of the streets or the baskets which contained the excreta of human beings. It was only natural that ordinary people were not anxious to mix with those of their countrymen whose whole life was spent in in the drains. As they passed you in the streets you instinctively avoided them, and if you avoided the man who did the work it followed that you would avoid his wife who mixed with him and his children too. Later when the children grew up they followed in their father's footsteps, till after a few years a community sprang up from among which India picked its scavengers, its sweepers, and its lavatory attendants.

With the coming of sanitation, and the gradual spread of education this community which were now known as the Untouchables, resented being treated as lepers in their own country and by their own people. They were denied the right to enter the temples and to make their offering to the common God of all Hindooism. They claimed that in the eyes of God all men were equal, and that it was unfair that those who no longer did the work for which they were regarded as untouchable, should still be ostracised by Society because of the rigour of caste which had put a mark against these people and their descendants for all time. It then became an unjust prejudice, whose only justifica-

tion was that it had existed before, exists now and must for ever exist.

With the coming of reforms and the grant of a measure of self-government to the people of India, the Untouchables also claimed to have themselves represented in the legislatures and the executives of their country. Their representatives asked for separate electorates, so as to assure a minimum of representation. They wanted to have a share in the government of the country, for apart from the fact that caste had regarded them as untouchable, they were made to suffer poverty. Jobs were closed to them because the high caste Hindoo would refuse to to have any dealings with them, and they seemed to be perpetually condemned to do the work their fore-fathers had done. In the economic read-justment of India, they would necessarily have to be considered.

But there have been two points of view expressed as to how to better their position. The official representatives of these condemned classes were not willing to trust anyone. They knew from experience what to expect from their own community, and they were sure that other communities would not interfere on their account. So that if the Government of the country was to pass into the hands of their fellow-countrymen, they wanted a guarantee that their position would be safeguarded. But others like Gandhi took a longer view. No

doubt there was something to be said for special representation, but was it not making the Untouchables an ostracised section of India by reason of such special representation ? And in this transference of power was it wise to begin the new epoch with distinction ?

It is difficult to say which of these prevailing views will better the lot of these unfortunate people. Both views are equally sincere and quite contradictory, and there is no guarantee that either the one or the other will remove untouchability in India. So that within the struggle of India for freedom, has come the struggle of the Untouchables or the Harijans to free themselves from the servitude which had been imposed upon them by the larger Hindoo community.

To Nehru there was only one answer to the Harijan problem, and that answer was to be found in the economic emancipation of the masses. That was the solution of all the problems of India—communal, social and political. In the India which he had planned, all people would eventually meet at one point—all people who had come from different places and by different routes. All he was concerned with was the eventual meeting of the peoples of India, and he wanted that they should all follow the same methods of travelling. The Harijans were therefore to have no special compartments in this train which was chartered to

bring the masses to the Capital of Freedom.

But Gandhi was not satisfied with this peremptory answer to the greatest social problem of his country. He upheld the idea that separate electorates would do no good, but was the economic revolution going to free the Harijans of a disadvantage which had been imposed upon them purely by the bigotry of caste ?

At the end of his dazzling political career, Gandhi made the most sensational pronouncement of his life, when he retired from the political arena to devote the rest of his life to the cause of those of his countrymen whom prejudice had denied the right of living fully in the land of their fathers. His *ashram* was no longer to be the scene of momentous and historic decisions on important political questions. It was henceforward to be forging house of the equality of men, for he wanted no stain left on that idea of freedom for which he had spent the greater part of his life fighting. There could be no freedom for India, until India was itself prepared to free those whose freedom it had encrusted. He had done the spadework and planted some of the seeds in what was one day to become the Garden of Eden, and now the master gardener had given over charge to the young apprentice to whom he had taught the art. So Nehru was in charge ot the land, while Gandhi contented himself with wandering round the country-side picking the weeds

wherever he saw them and plucking the roots of untouchability which had grafted themselves in the soil. It was touching to see the old man back on the land.

The response to the Mahatma's appeal on behalf of the Harijans was to be the true test of the nation. He had devoted his whole life to the cause of the Indian people. He had voiced their grievances, and had often gone on hunger-strike in order to be heard. He had taught them how to win their fight without bloodshed. He had trained a whole nation in the ways of non-violence, a creed which he so thoroughly perfected that authority in India found itself helpless to offer any resistance. For what can a Government do when a whole nation is fighting against it with passive resistance? The revolutions of France and Russia had been of a different kind. They had paid heavily for their freedom, but the victory of the Indian people was with the very minimum loss of life.

All this he had done for India, and now in return he asked of that country to show its gratitude by giving freedom to the slaves of caste and by abolishing the inhuman caste distinctions which had denied a great many of their birthright. He asked that the temple gates be opened, so that at least in the house of God all men could be equal. In his *Ashram* he tended to their needs, so that his followers could emulate his example. Gandhi

knew that even an economic revolution could not break through the strong barrier of caste prejudice.

It is difficult at this stage of our national history to say what will become of the Harijans of India. Will they who have also struggled for the freedom of India ever enjoy fully the fruits of our victory? The wrath of God would fall too heavily on us if when the struggle was over we denied them their full share in that freedom which they had helped to bring about.

So poverty and prejudice became two of the greatest obstacles in the way of realising our ideals. But are our ideals the same as those of the generation that still dominates the destiny of India? The power of orthodoxy in spite of the attacks that have been made on it has not waned, and prejudice still predominates in spite of Gandhi. Perhaps there was something in what Nehru said. It is too early to tell. Someday we will realise that caste has done our country little good and that in the settlement of accounts we will have to pay for the poverty that we have neglected in this attempt to resurrect and save our national soul.

Some phases of this prejudice have struck me as brutally inhuman. I am told that on the Malabar Coast, which is somewhere in the South of India, and where the Nayar community is regarded as the privileged caste, life is almost unbearable for those who happen to belong to the depressed classes. If

a Nayar is coming down the street, the wretched Untouchable must not cross his path, for that would be a grave insult, and it therefore falls to the lot of him who is branded to remove himself so as not to pollute the ground which the Nayar is to tread. Then we begin to realise what prejudice means and what caste stands for in India, and when we find that orthodoxy and the Government are not too eager to see this destroyed, we appreciate the task that lies ahead.

XIII

NOT YET THE END

SUCH IS MY IMPRESSION OF INDIA. ONLY AN IMpression, nothing more. It is not intended to be an autobiography, nor an authoritative treatise on my country. I could not at my age attempt either. I only want to show the struggle of an individual in the face of opposition at home and prejudice abroad. It is also for me an attempt to understand my people and myself. At this egotistical stage of one's life, nothing seems to matter except the self and in terms of the self. Selfish sentiment–it lays itself open to criticism. But young men like me who have been educated in England are inclined to become selfish——torn as we are between rival loyalties. On our return to our country we find that environment begins to conflict with ideals, that our sympathies are divided and our little world appears to have become half-caste—made up of the East and the West, with neither half wanting to claim us as its own.

British by passport, I feel uncomfortable when I hear "Rule Britannia", for it now implies subjection, though at school we were put into sailor suits

and made to sing it. When I hear it now it reminds me too much of the grim struggle of my people to assert their freedom and to free themselves from the allegiance which has been extorted at the point of the sword. Yet when I look at my own countrymen and see how some of them have degraded themselves, I feel ashamed of my own kith and kin. I find myself drifting away from the thought and opinion that dominate my country. I object to being judged by their standards and I have little respect for their conception of morals. I resent also that uneducated, uncultured, narrow-minded people should lay down the rules of life, which I am to follow. Their idea of religion does not coincide with mine, and I find their methods of prayer too unsatisfactory to appease the pangs of my soul. I have no love for ceremonial, no respect for the customs and the prejudices which they regard almost as sacred. Only one thing I know binds me to them, and binds me fast, for I was like them, born dark.

This I regard as the most significant fact about myself, my race, my people. All other distinguishing marks we are fast losing, even as the identity of our civilisation is being discarded in idealising the West. Yet I realise that the state in which we are now makes us necessarily dependent upon the West. Science is the trump card that is missing from our pack, and this we can only get

on loan from the West. Even my own outlook on life is, I must admit, largely the result of seven years' contact with the West—with Oxford, London, Paris, and the reaction these cities have had on a refugee who started to flee from the taboos of India, and later, found himself fleeing from the hard prejudices of the white races back to his own people. Life seems to be one perpetual flight between the East and the West—fleeing because I belong nowhere.

I know now how true it was when my cousin, who went to Cambridge before I started on my Oxford expedition, said that the more I took in of Oxford, of England and of the West, the more sorry I would feel that I went there. That is very true. It makes you dissatisfied with life, with your own people, with yourself. It creates a strange longing in you which is difficult to satisfy. It makes you wonder what India is really like, what it stands for, and what it is aiming at.

Sometimes I sit and dream of things like sunset on the Ganges and wonder whether this is symbolic of the India to which I belong. Or the Taj Mahal and the Ajanta Caves, or a *yogi* in his saffron garments, his forehead covered with strange caste marks, and ask myself if that is India. But these images fade and the cynicism which I have acquired turns sentimentality into satire. Then I picture an Indian student in green suéde shoes, dancing on

the floor of the Hammersmith Astoria with his landlady's daughter, and it turns my liver inside out. But we are like that—alternating between the sublime and the ridiculously ludicrous. Modern India combines quiet simplicity, beauty, mysticism, with that which is crude, vulgar and nauseating.

The trouble is I can genuinely appreciate both pictures. I like to hear stories told at the expense of whose who show off their little smattering of the English language and less of literature. I can never forget that Parsee gentleman who contracted the double "e" into a short staccato "i", with the result that a restaurant in "Flit" Street became noted for its "Bif" and "Chiz." One day he said that at Brighton, if you were not careful, you might slip on the "bich"! He talked about the sad death of a young man who died at "Nipples" and whose body had to be "embossed" before being sent back to India. All this I like to hear because it makes me feel superior by comparison. It reveals my patronising attitude to those who cannot drawl as well as I can and the tolerance with which those of us who are educated here regard our countrymen. Our attitude is different from that of the serious-minded, orthodox Indian student who has come to England with full instructions as to how the family tradition of being vegetarians should be continued by daily visits to "Shearn's" and the "Vega" to eat spinach like Pop-eye the

Sailor. These compatriots of mine remain untouched by the influence of this brutally cynical attitude to life which is essentially Western. In the years they spend in England they acquire knowledge about complicated machinery or they learn the art of dentistry. But they go back as they came, without a particle of change with the exception perhaps of a suit from Austin Reed's, the habit of plastering down hair with Anzora, and a taste for Burton's Pale Ale. That is all they ever take back.

In the days when there were open double-decker buses in London, a cousin of mine happened to spot an Indian student on the top of the bus which had parked itself alongside theirs. He was wearing a bowler hat. My cousin turned to his friend and bet him a pound he did not have the nerve to smash the bowler. The bet was accepted and, as the traffic moved, the friend rolled his evening paper and brought it into contact with the bowler. Unfortunately, the buses did not move away as fast as he had anticipated, and soon the conductor and a policeman were on the scene, while the Indian student came down struggling to free himself from his hat which had covered his ears with the impact. Realising that the situation was quite serious, my cousin rushed up to him and said: "Frightfully sorry, old man, we thought you were an intimate friend of ours." And it worked, for the Indian student registered his mild protest, saying: " Arre

man, butt iz dhiz dhe vey to trit an yntimate friend ? "

It shows how we take advantage of our dumb countrymen. And yet, bring an Englishman into the scene and let him smash the bowler on the Indian's head, and these same two young men would be the first to land their fists on that pure white complexion. It shows that the fundamental difference for us on all vital issues is after all that we realise at the crucial moment that we are born dark, and that binds us together more than anything else. Then we forget our Western varnish and the Indian student becomes one of us, in spite of his bowler hat, and his ridiculously serious countenance.

I saw this happen in a slightly varied form in a *boîte* in Paris where an Englishman was feeling sore that a little French girl would not dance with him, but accepted to dance with a coloured man. As the girl and her coloured partner passed his table the Englishman turned to his companion and, on a fairly loud voice, said: "The bloody nigger."

A famous negro boxer at the next table overheard the remark. He turned to the Englishman and told him he should not be so offensive, but the Englishman repeated what he had said with greater emphasis. The negro boxer got up, apologised to the ladies at his table and went over to the Englishman whom he picked up by the collar of his coat and clouted on the jaw. The *maître d'hotel* and two waiters arrived hastily on the scene and

caught the unconscious Englishman as the negro shook him off like a piece of dirt. I thought there was going to be a free fight, in which the management would obviously be on the side of the injured party. I don't know who was regarded as the injured party, but I saw the body being quietly removed by two waiters, while the *maître d'hotel* was apologising profusely to the negro boxer for having put him to the trouble of using his fists. The man of strength sat down, muttering approval, and said : "That's all right. He didn't do me no harm. It's just the principle." And that is exactly what it was—just a principle that dark men should stand by dark men when a white skin is involved. That is how humanity instinctively divides itself on such occasions.

Some of us who go back to India after a Varsity education or a few years at Sandhurst or Cranwell are contemptuously referred to as Wogs. It is the abbreviation for Westernised Oriental Gentlemen. Some of us deserve to be called that. We resent it because we do not like to be told so bluntly that we behave like apes who are attempting a retrogression of the species surviving too long in the same state. I like to believe that I am different from them, but I find myself doing the things I condemn in others. Tradition is difficult to shake off, even though it may consist chiefly of exhibitionism. Yet I like to differentiate between the

motives and to draw subtle shades of difference. I say I like to wear a Sulka shirt because it puts me in a certain frame of mind. I have not the heart to confess that when I go to Delhez for a haircut, I am impressed by the names of celebrities pasted on the large bottles of lotion that surround me. I don't like to admit that when I go to the Berkeley I like Ferraro to pay a little special attention to me, even though he has no idea who I am. Yet I like all these things. I like to eat oysters at Prunier's more than at any other place, even though elsewhere they may not cost so much. I like to have a gardenia in my buttonhole when I am sporting my evening clothes. I like to drink into the early hours of the morning at a night club, with one of the demi-mondaine to amuse me with her little conversation. I like to spend an occasional week-end in Paris, and I get an intense satisfaction from knowing my Paris well. I like to think I am getting more out of things than others who do exactly the same. Yet I realise that all time there is an element of exhibitionism underlying all this and that I am not very different from so many others who do these things more obviously. I feel quite at home in the midst of this sophistication, empty though it may be, while more solid surroundings at home bore me. I know that these are things which don't matter in life, but this sniff of cocaine inspires and helps me to move from one mood of despair to another. And

what makes it more exciting is that I cannot take any of these things for granted. Sometimes I hold my breath and wonder where the next half-crown will come from. A cigarette case in pawn—a cigarette case redeemed, so life goes on. One redemption after the other. I live if only for the joy of redeeming. It makes life worth living. I like to feel that my bedsitter may one day swell out into a smart studio apartment, where the curtains will be of dark blue plush and braided with gold and where the ash-trays will be so large I will not have to stretch to flick my ash. But I also like to feel that to-morrow my bed-sitter may shrink into a bed. Yet I would rather it was that way than that I should at my age sit smugly complacent in a bed-sitter all my life.

But will anyone at home ever understand that point of view? Will they ever realise that a young man who refuses the shelter of security is not necessarily immoral—that even the conception of morality has changed with the coming of the new generation, and that what may have appeared in shocking taste to our grand-parents is only routine to us. This is the most difficult situation that faces young men like me, who wish to depart from the beaten track and discard the dogmas of orthodoxy—the problem of convincing our elders that the right of youth to assert itself cannot be denied, and that sooner or later India will have to get used to

the idea that its youth has also risen in revolt against the domination of orthodox opinion and this time it is orthodoxy that will have to give way. That is the aspect of the struggle of those of us who have been denied a full share in the enjoyment of life on the grounds of our adolescence.

I remember the day, just about a year ago, when the news came late at night in India that Edward VIII, King of England, had abdicated. There had been a great deal of discussion in the family as there was in every other family of the world, as to what was the right thing for him to do. I noticed that the more senior members of the family were inclined to stress the constitutional aspect, while the younger generation were all for freedom of the individual, no matter who he was, and his right to decide what was right and what was moral in all matters affecting him. I could hear these conflicting opinions being bandied about while I was in the next room turning out an article for a Bombay paper which was headed " A kingdom for a woman." I had very little time, for early next morning I was due to leave for Karachi to say good-bye to my father before sailing for England. I remember correcting the article in the tender on my way to the boat which was lying mid-stream, and the feeling of satisfaction when I finished my tribute to the man who was much after my heart. Sad though I was at the tragedy of the abdication,

I rejoiced that there was amongst us at least one who had the courage of his convictions and who had by choosing to abdicate told orthodox, conventional, prudish Society what he really thought of it. Looked at from that point of view, it was a great day in the history of the conflict of generations, a day which the youth of the world should celebrate. Ostensibly orthodoxy may have triumphed, tradition upheld, and the constitution of England saved, but the moral victory was for youth. It was a triumph for the new generation, of which Edward VIII, in spite of his kingly role, was the symbol.

So that this struggle against orthodoxy was not confined only to modern India.

But India presented other aspects of struggle. There was the struggle of poverty against vested interests, of untouchability against caste-prejudice, and of the masses as a whole against the domination of the British rule, against the dictatorship of self-appointed leaders, against all those who wanted to hold them back in the same low standard of living, if life it can be called, as they were now. The problem of India, therefore, as we saw it, was what was to happen to all those millions and millions of people who were the dark specks over India. Can anyone tell ?

It is difficult at any time to forecast the destiny of any nation or of a whole country. One great

war can upset the best of calculations. Who would have believed that the ruling monarch of pre-War Germany, the great Kaiser Wilhelm II, would ever have had to spend the autumn and winter of his life as an exile in Doorn, and that in quick succession Germany would be turned into a republic and later into a Fascist dictatorship *über alles*, but under Adolf Hitler ?

Yet these things have all come to pass and the element of surprise fades away with lapse of time. When the drive to exterminate the Jews from Germany was started, we were told that the world would not stand for anything so inhuman, but it did. When Italy marched into Abyssinia it was the League of Nations that was going to make its force felt, but Italy conquered Abyssinia just the same. And since then we have seen a civil war in Spain and a war in the Far East which have upset the best of calculations. All these things were not anticipated by our fathers, nor did they know that in their own country the powerful despotism of the British Government would give way to our crop of amateur politicians, or else they would not have stuck so faithfully and so long to the British Raj !

The next years are, therefore, just as uncertain. God alone knows what will happen, but we know what we want to happen. That is the future of India as we see it, as we want to see it and as can reasonably be forecasted.

Therefore, I think that the turning-point of modern Indian history was Nehru's presidential address to the Congress, when he spoke of the Socialism that was soon to come. He made it clear that his view was not the view of the Congress as a whole, but in so far as he was their elected President, it was only fair that he should state his opinion clearly in fairness to the Party which had made him their leader. It was the way he meant to go. It was the way India would be guided by him to go.

Socialism !—that word used to cause uneasiness when mentioned in India. Even the most intelligent people feared Socialism as children fear going into the dark. And to them it was going into the dark, for no one knew what Socialism stood for or what it meant. Society in India is slow to acclimatise itself to any radical change, and Socialism has always been looked upon with suspicion as something that is vulgar in its exposition and dangerous in execution. Their reaction corresponded to that of the English people to the formation of the Soviet Republic. English people resented the presence of the first Soviet Ambassador at the Court of St. James's. They were not willing to accept the Communist Revolution as an historical fact, but time exercised its healing influence, and to-day the English send their Secretaries of State to kiss Stalin on both cheeks, if only as a

diplomatic gesture. But even though orthodox England has learned to recognise the existence of Communism, India is still a little reluctant to acknowledge Socialism in its midst.

To advocate Socialism involves the instant disapproval of authority in India. Orthodoxy and the Government of India have no use for Socialism. They still believe that every cloud has its silver lining, and that there is prosperity round the corner of every depression, and all they have done for the workless, the poor, the unemployed, is to ask them to have faith in God, make strange offerings and wait for manna to drop from the heavens. This is the philosophy of life, which they want us to imbibe. It is the basis of their sound economic principles. It is even their religion.

Socialism, however, is always being confounded with the art of being sociable on the one hand and with revolution and Communism on the other. It is like the confusion that exists in India about words like "gigolo", which they believe has something to do with homosexuals or some perverted form of sex. So, too, Socialism is some perverted political creed which is not "decent."

But Nehru had advocated it as the only salvation of the peoples of India. It was a momentous decision and the reaction of small fry was interest-

ing to watch. All over the country the Liberals were denouncing this "Socialism" which they hardly understood. It was the end, they said, of our culture and religion and all that India held sacred. Cluture, indeed !—and coming from our Liberals it sounds absurd.

I cannot at this stage refrain from repeating what I said in the vote of thanks to that same Sir Cowasji Jehangir about the Liberal Party, of which he was the newly elected President. I had heard at the Union at Oxford someone speak of the policy of the National Government and say that to find the policy of the National Government was like looking at the dead of night in a dark room for a black cat which wasn't there. That may have been a slight under-estimation of the policy of the National Government, but it certainly was an accurate representation of the state of affairs within the Liberal fold in India. The Liberals wanted their bread to be buttered on both sides, running, as they did, between *Swaraj Bhuvan,* which was the Congress headquarters, and Government House, lest in being too partial to one side they may be left in the cold when the other came to power.

Nehru said of the Liberals of India, and it is worth recording: " What they are exactly it is difficult to say, for they have no firm positive basis of ideas, and, though small in number, differ from one another. They are strong only in negation.

They see error everywhere and attempt to avoid it, and hope that in doing so they will find the truth. Truth for them indeed always lies between two extremes. By criticising everything they consider extreme, they experience the feeling of being virtuous and moderate and good. This method helps them in avoiding painful and difficult processes of thought and in having to put forward constructive ideas. Capitalism, some of them vaguely feel, has not wholly succeeded in Europe and is in trouble; on the other hand Socialism is obviously bad, because it attacks vested interests."

And that was the attitude to Socialism of a body of men who regarded themselves and were regarded by others as reasonably intelligent. There is little wonder that Nehru's bombshell of the coming of Socialism was regarded with trepidation by those who feared it and as nonsensical prattle by those who did not even know what Socialism stood for.

About the same time as Nehru made this brilliant presidential address, I happened to be reciting a few old Oxford epigrams to the Rotary Club of Bombay, heading my address " The Problem of the Younger Generation." A few days past and a cousin of mine sent me a cutting from a newspaper in Lahore, which is read widely in the North of India. The leader column was headed "Clouds and Sense." It began : "One descends with relief from the journey in the clouds with Pandid *Jawaharlal Nehru* to *terra*

firma with Mr. D. F. Karaka."

I have seldom experienced such a feeling of shame and embarrassment as I did when I read through this leader which was a comparison between Nehru, a world figure, and myself. I should have been very flattered to have been compared with someone less well-known and with whom I could reasonably be compared. But with Nehru, who was for me one of India's men of destiny, it was ridiculous. My embarrassment increased as I read through that leader column in which Nehru was merely the clouds and I was made out to be sense. It made me feel small and, even though I may have wished sometimes to be compared with the high and the mighty, now that it had come I did not like it, because I myself was attempting to say what Nehru had with greater precision and clarity, with much more force and authority. And it was only because I was younger and did not have his experience in Indian politics and was afraid that I did not venture to say more.

That is the only real difference between Nehru and those young men like me who want to bring about Socialism in India. It is that we are afraid, while he is not. For he would not stop at anything to bring about that ideal state which he has contemplated for India, whereas we are willing to wait rather than adopt the methods of a Communist revolution. To us the idea of bloodshed is frigh-

tening. We detest violence, partly because we are cowards, partly because we do not want to buy our freedom and our self-respect so dearly. You cannot blame young men for wanting to live rather than to die young and be crucified as martyrs by posterity. That is the real difference between us. That was the only comparison which could be made —the difference of the methods of making our ideals come true. That leader page might have been headed: "Courage and Cowardice", not "Clouds and Sense."

Yet it is difficult to label myself as a coward. It is, at any rate, the verdict of the outside world on those of us who would rather call ourselves pacifists. But I soon found out after the "King and Country" debate at Oxford that it did not matter what argument you put forward, a pacifist was, in the eyes of the brave, only a coward, and by the brave I mean all those who called us cowards. Some people can never understand why anyone should not want to fight so long as the slogan for which they were fighting was good enough. "King and Country" was a good enough slogan, and a great many people were stirred by the very sound of it.

But from my point of view what did it mean? That is how I looked upon it. That is how all dark men will henceforth look upon it. What does it mean to us? Is it our country and our people that we are defending? Is it our hearths and our

homes? I doubt very much whether in the face of an invasion over India I would lean back in my chair and say: "No, I am a pacifist." For I would fight for those who, like me, are dark and have suffered because of their colour. I can visualise fighting for such a cause, even though I hate the idea of an early death. Perhaps it is because I feel that it is the one time when we shall all be equal—dark men as well as white—dead. There is in death a unifying process which establishes the equality of men. You enter a mortuary and you say "dead men,." You do not say these are dead Germans or dead Frenchmen or dead Englishmen or dead anyone else. You do not say that they are dead white men or dead black. The one predominant fact about them is that they are dead, and you are willing to pay them the respect that is due to the dead, irrespective of caste or creed or colour. It is strange that this should be so, but it is true.

Yet was the way of death the only way to establish the equality of men and the freedom of the masses? And would we go so far if it was essential for the establishment of a new economic order in India?

These questions are difficult to answer in cold blood. Instinct may guide us differently on the spur of the moment, and all our convictions and years of non-violence may be set aside if the things

we see happening before us are too horrible. If we can realise the sufferings of our people, we may be moved to sacrifice our lives, but far away in the security of our surroundings we see little of the India which suffers. Sometimes I wonder whether we ever made an attempt to look beyond ourselves, or to change our banal mode of existence, for there is no use speaking of Socialism as the salvation of the people of India unless we know what Socialism implies and what we must do to bring it about, and authority in India sees to it that we never get any opportunity of studying anything that can possibly give us an idea of Socialism. There is the utmost scrutiny exercised by the Government of India over those who show the slightest interest in Socialism. No one can go to Soviet Russia without being a marked man in the eyes of the Indian C.I.D. No one can read Karl Marx unless it has crept into India without the knowledge of the Customs authorities. The bulk of Socialist literature is regarded as seditious,—not only by the Englishmen in India, but also by our own countrymen in authority. The result of years of subjection is that we ourselves are afraid of being free—afraid to go where we want, to read, to learn.

I saw the fear of freedom portrayed in the American version of the film *Emile Zola*, where Dreyfus is shown in a cell on Devil's Island. When the news of his acquittal arrives after many long years and the

gates are unlocked and Dreyfus is told he is free, he walks out of his cell, then goes back to it, not realising what freedom means. Out again, he goes back once more. Years of imprisonment have made him forget what freedom means, and he keeps coming back to the cell because he cannot get used to the idea of being free. In some ways we are like that, too. We are partly to be blamed for the condition of India.

When Lord Willingdon was Governor of Bombay our socialites used to visit Government House when this was thrown open to the public, and they would seek with reverence a glimpse of those innumerable pairs of shoes which the noble lord had acquired. Perhaps it was symbolic of the power that was vested in him. Perhaps it was the velvet glove which covered the mailed fist or the boot that kicked and trampled on the under-dog. And to think that my own countrymen used to queue up to see this. We acquired one of the shoes and it is called the Willingdon Shoe. Ironic as it might seem, it is in dark brown and white—a strange combination of colours, stranger still that brown and white, so symbolic of our two two races, should combine to form an Englishman's shoe. It shows how we ourselves have helped the English to trample down our own countrymen. I am afraid the history of India is full of such instances.

In the struggle to free our countrymen from a

foreign domination we have found our own countrymen against us, even as we young men in our efforts to assert our individuality found our own parents on the opposite side. So the struggle of India goes on and the struggle of us young men too. This is not yet the end. There is to be no Socialism for India for a long time. Our industrial magnates, who have devoted their lives and their energies to make industry pay, are not going to be converted overnight to the idea of production with a view to consumption. The high-caste Brahmin is not going to worship in the same temple as the Untouchable, and a casteless Society will not be born without a conflict. The Princes will fight to the bitter end to retain that sovereign power which is vested in them, and the poor will still remain the black specks over India. Power is too valuable a possession to be given up without a struggle, and the strength of that power we young men also feel when we fight against orthodoxy, public opinion, our elders, tradition, and conventional morality. Some day perhaps we may break through that cordon of authority. So many of us have already perished in the effort and so many others will, but the struggle goes on.

Yet this struggle of the individual, this revolt of youth is subservient to the main struggle of us dark people against those who are white. And it is only because I feel that everyday more and more of my

countrymen are beginning to think that way that I hope that my way will eventually lie East, for I am like all its sons, born dark, and this establishes an equality amongst us.

I have always regarded posterity as a chilly prospect. Yet if I could visualise a day when our children or our children's children could say that we brought forth into that continent a new nation conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are really equal, then I would fight for that freedom—even if it was the freedom of posterity.

Some of us feel that day will soon come. I often wonder whether there will be any Englishmen left in India on that day or whether they would rather leave than see the most priceless jewel in the Imperial Crown turned into a national playing-ground for our dark children.

I remember the last leader of a paper called *The Englishman* in Calcutta, before it said good-bye to the India that they had known for many years. There was something pathetic in that farewell—pathetic that a newspaper of some standing should close down because the things it stood for no longer existed. The old idea of Empire had faded away. First there had been the mailed fist. Then came the mailed-fist-in-the-velvet-glove, and later the mailed fist was tried again, and then only the velvet glove, and now there was neither fist nor glove.

Such was the lament of *The Englishman*, and there were a great many more Englishmen in India who felt the same. I remember that article well, though I cannot lay hands on it now. It began with a recital of the power and the omnipotence of the British Rule when that paper first started and it ended up with deploring the power of the Indian people and the rise of the Congress and all that it implied.

Pathetic as that may sound, there was something about it that savoured of ingratitude—despicable in any man, and more so in those who had lived all their lives at the expense of a poor down-trodden people whom they had exploited and whom they could exploit no more. There is one word in Hindustani which describes such people. We call them *nimuchharam*, or ingratitude for the very salt you eat—salt being regarded as most essential for human existence. When we use that word it is usually with a great deal of contempt, and that is how I use it now, when I think of the farewell leader of *The Englishman*.

Those Englishmen who go to India to-day go there with their eyes wide open, realising that the India of to-day is no longer the India that used to be. We are glad to receive those who arrive with the full realisation of that change. It is no longer the India in which they could lean back in their arm-chairs and hear the poor natives say: " We

who are about to die, salute thee." That pagan form of worship has come and gone, and the rule of the iron hand will not, I am afraid, be attempted again. When Lord Willingdon succeeded Lord Irwin (now Lord Halifax) as Viceroy, the last feeble effort was made to try out the rule of force. That was the last of disguised despotism.

There is little doubt in my mind that there will be a great exodus of those Englishmen who cannot adapt themselves to this new mode of thinking. They are so used to saying "*suver ka buccha*" to their bearers on the slightest provocation that they cannot get out of the habit. But at least when they leave, let them go in a more dignified manner than some others have gone. Let them at least once show their gratitude to the country which for several generations fed them and their wives and children and found employment for them, which was more than their own country did. Let them at least once be grateful not so much for what we have given, but for what they have taken. Some day perhaps they may need us again.

That is the vision which we dreamers see—the vision of a dark, free India, where those who are white will come as friends by courtesy and not as despots by force. All other visions are mere illusions. Only this we want to see. Only this must our children see, for they will be like us, born dark.